Teaching of Writing Skills in TCFL

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Outline

- What is writing
- Purpose of Writing
- Process Writing
- Learning to Write
- Approaches to teaching Writing
- Teaching L2 Writing

1 What is Writing?

A. Writing is marks on paper or on a screen.
B. Writing is the act of somebody who writes.
C. Writing is based on knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and letter formation (character writing in TCFL).
D. Writing is based on the skills of planning, drafting and revising.
E. Writing is the activity of creating pieces of written work, such as stories or poems.
F. Writing is a way of achieving a social purpose.

What is Writing ?

- Writing is more than the production of graphic symbols, just as speech is more than the production of sounds.
- Writing is when "we produce a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways."
- The sequence may be very short – perhaps only two or three sentences - but, because of the way the sentences have been put in order and linked together, they form a coherent whole. They form what we may call a **text**.

Donn Byrne (1988)

What is Writing?

- The activity or skill of writing.
- The act or process of producing and recording words in a form that can be read and understood.
- The activity or occupation of composing text for publication.

Oxford Dictionaries

- Writing is a skill. It is a skill like driving, typing, or cooking; and, **like any skill, it can be learned**.

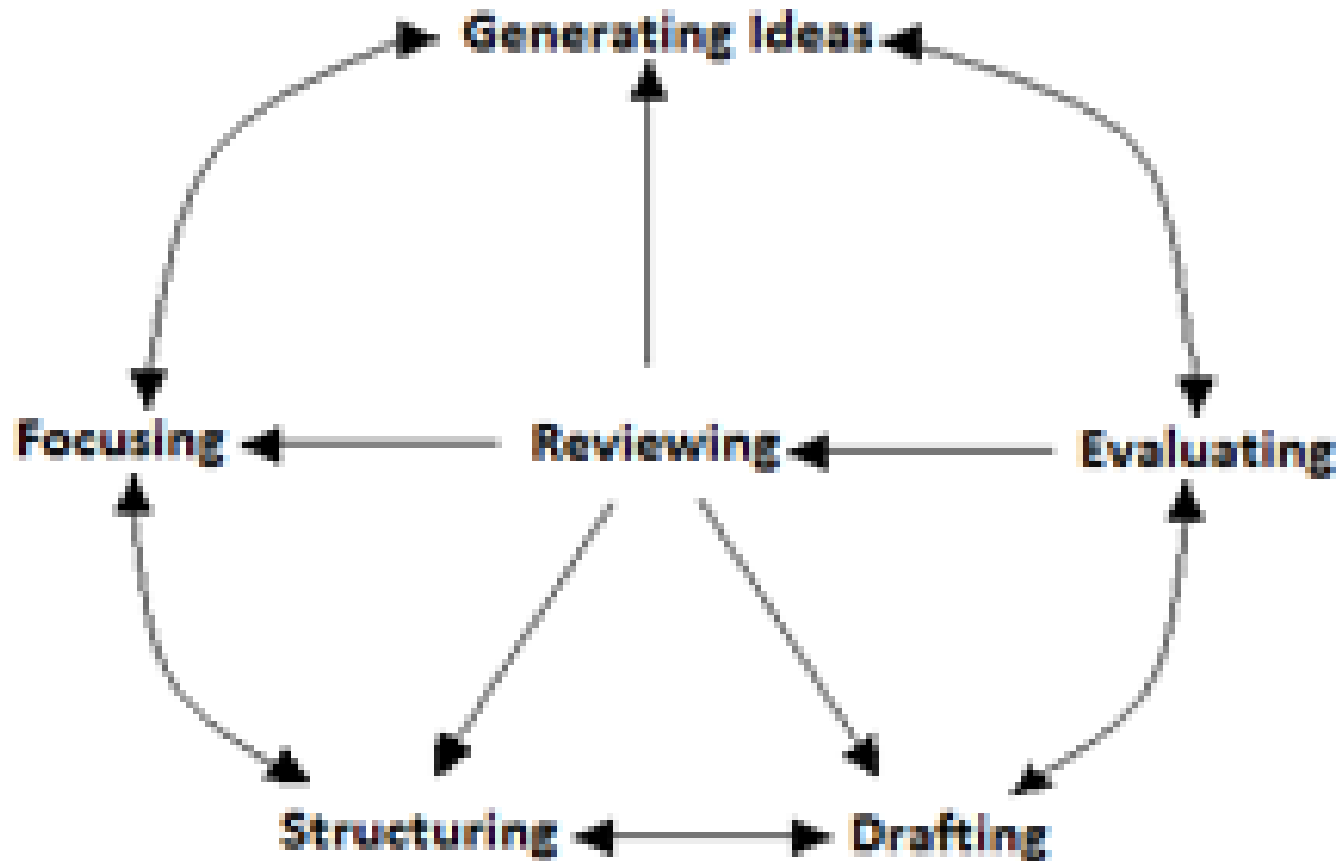John Langan, (2001)

2 Purpose of Writing

General purposes
- Writing for a reader
- Translating our thoughts into language (Essays, papers etc.)
- For communicating
- For pleasure (Poems. Stories, novels …)

Specific purposes
- For making a note/list
- For keeping records
- For sending messages (letter, forms, applications etc.)

Donn Byrne (1988)

3 Process Writing

Process Writing

1 Generating ideas: this is an initial and crucial part of the writing process.

- Brainstorming: choose a topic

  Identify a reason or purpose for writing

  Find an appropriate form in which to write

  Develop a topic

  Work out a plot

  Develop the organisation of ideas

- Using questions
- Making notes: unstructured or structured

  Concerned with generating ideas and organising them, correctness and precision of language

- Using visuals
- Using role play/ simulation

Process Writing

2 Focusing

Very often, the central idea does not start to emerge clearly until writing is in progress.

- Discovering the main ideas
- Considering purpose
- Considering audience
- Considering form

Process Writing

3 Structuring: there are various processes of grouping ideas together and deciding how to sequence them.

- Ordering information
- Experimenting with arrangements
- Relating structure to focal idea

4 Drafting

- Beginning, adding, ending

5 Evaluating

- Assessing the draft

- Responding

- Conferencing: a procedure in which the teacher or another reader and the writer work together on what the writer has written, motivated by a concern with clarifying the writer's intentions, purpose and meaning.

Process Writing

6 Reviewing

- Checking the context

Considering purpose, audience and form

- Checking connections

- Checking divisions

- Assessing impact

How to manipulate words and structures to say what they have to say to the best effect, and to evoke the response they want from the reader.

- Editing, correcting and marking

- Taking final stock of the product
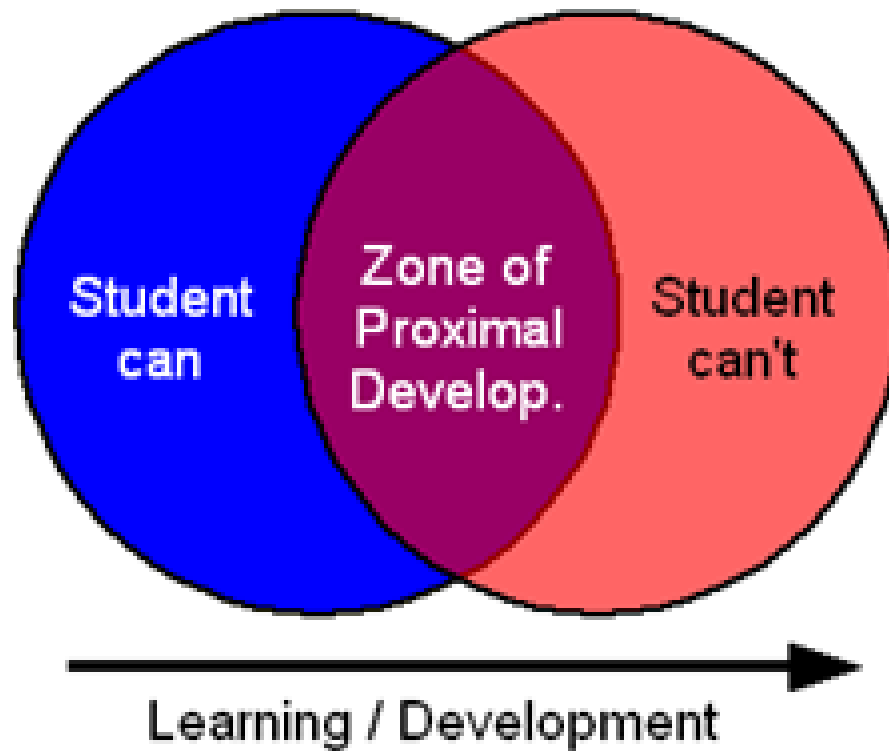
4 Learning to write

Ideas about learning to write

➢ Behaviourists (Harmer, 2007: 51-52) believe that we learn by **imitating** models and receiving positive **reinforcement** or feedback until activities have become automatic.

➢ Krashen (Harmer, 2007: 50, Krashen, 1981, 1989) argues that we learn to write by understanding messages. More formally, he says we need to receive **comprehensible input** at a level of 'i+1' (just above what we can now understand)

➢ Some cognitive psychologists (Harmer, 2007:53-54, Anderson, 2000) believe that we learn to write by firstly **noticing** a feature of writing, then practising it enough that we are able to carry out the action without thinking. Noticing is an ambiguous term and you will need to think about what kinds of activities might encourage noticing. There are a range of different views within this approach.

Learning to write

- Vygotsky (Lightbrown and Spada, 2006: 47-48, Vygotsky, 1962, 1978) believed we learn by being helped to do an activity by someone who is better at doing that activity and that as the amount of help is reduced we learn to do the activity on our own. More technically, an expert **scaffolds** us to something within our **zone of proximal development** (ZPD)

- Scaffolding: an instructional strategy. In a classroom setting, the teacher is responsible for structuring interactions and developing instruction in small steps based on tasks the learner is already capable of performing independently.

- Zone of proximal development (ZPD) (最新发展区域): The gap between what a learner has already mastered (the actual level of development) and what he or she can achieve when provided with educational support (potential development).

Learning to write

Learning to write

> **Legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) (合法/理化的边缘性参与)** describes how newcomers become experienced members of a community of practice or of a collaborative project (Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991).

According to LPP, newcomers become members of a community initially by participating in simple and low-risk tasks that are nonetheless productive and necessary and further the goals of the community.

Task 1

Questions:

1. How clear are the ideas?

2. Do the ideas make sense to you in terms of your experience?

3. What are the implications for the writing classroom?

4. How would you apply them to different approaches?

5 Approaches to teaching writing

➢ Hyland (2003) identifies a range of different foci in the teaching of writing. There are other classifications. Hyland (2002, p5-48) had earlier identified three foci,

related to <u>texts</u>,

related to <u>process</u> and

related to <u>readers</u>.

Approaches to teaching writing

➢ Badger and White (Badger and White, 2000) have three broad views:

Product: being primarily about linguistic knowledge, with attention focused on the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices (Pincas, 1982)

- Stage: familiarisation, controlled writing, guided writing and free writing

Process: to do with linguistic skills, such as planning and drafting, and there is much less emphasis on linguistic knowledge, such as knowledge about grammar and text structure.

- Stages: prewriting, composing/drafting, revising and editing

(Tribble, 1996:39)

Approaches to teaching writing

<u>Genre</u>: similar to product approach, it regards writing as predominantly linguistic but, unlike product approach, it emphasizes that writing varies with the social context in which it is produced.

- Stages: modelling the target genre, construction of a text by learners and teachers, the independent construction of texts by learners.

Approaches to teaching writing

➢ Kern (2000) views the teaching of writing as a social practice and proposed the **<u>Literacy</u>** approach

In broad terms, the teaching of writing involves a theory of writing and a theory of learning.

In terms of theory of writing, the main decision is between writing as an object and writing as a process/activity.

In terms of the theory of learning, the issue is whether people learn by writing (i.e. you learn to write by writing) or whether something else is needed to bring about learning (e.g. you need to analyse someone else's examples of writing before you start writing)

Approaches to teaching writing

Note

- It is important to remember that these approaches are resources for the language teacher. You do not have to choose one approach and stick to it. **You should choose the elements of the approach that you find most useful for a particular lesson with a particular group of learners**.

- In addition, you also need to remember that often writing is used in the language classroom as a way of supporting other skills. So writing is often used to help reinforce grammar, vocabulary or character writing.

Approaches to teaching writing

➢ **An eclectic view of writing**

All pieces of writing can be described in terms of **product**, **process**, **genre** or **social practice**.

- A product approach: the main focus is on knowledge related to sentences needed to write (e.g. syntax)
- A process approach: the main focus is on the skill needed to write (e.g. drafting)
- A genre approach: the main focus is on the text level knowledge needed to write (e.g. knowledge of the structure of a text)

Task 2

Please read

The "Introduction to Writing in Chinese" - the introduction to the writing class for Level two students of Chinese studies at SEAS.

Discuss the approaches adopted

6 Teaching L2 writing

Guiding concepts in teaching L2 writing:

- Language structure
- Text function
- Themes or topics
- Creative expression
- Composing processes
- Content
- Genre and contexts of writing

Teaching L2 writing: six orientations

1 Focus on language structure

- Writing is a coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences, structured according to a system of rules
- In this view, learning to write in L2 involves linguistic knowledge and the vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices that comprise the essential building blocks of texts.

A four-stage process:

1. Familiarization
2. Controlled writing
3. Guided writing
4. Free writing

Teaching L2 writing

2 Focus on text functions

- An important principle is to relate structures to meanings, making language use a criteria for teaching materials.

- Particular language forms perform certain communicative functions

- Functions are the means for achieving the ends (or purposes) of writing.

3 Focus on creative expression

- The third teaching orientation takes the writer, rather than form, as the point of departure.

- These classrooms are organised around students' personal experiences and opinions, and writing is considered a creative act of self-discovery.

Teaching L2 writing

4 Focus on the writing process

- The writer is seen as an independent producer of texts, the aim is to develop students' metacognitive awareness of their processes – their ability to reflect on the strategies they use to write.

- The planning-writing-reviewing framework established by Flower and Hayes(1981) sees writing as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and formulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning"

- The teachers' role is to guide students through the writing process, avoiding an emphasis on form to help them develop strategies for generating, drafting, and refining ideas.

Teaching L2 writing

5 Focus on content

- Emphasis on substantive content: what students are required to write about.

- Involve a set of themes or topics of interest that establish a coherence and purpose for the course or that set out the sequence of key areas of subject matter that students will address (Mohan, 1986)

- This is a popular organizing principle for L2 writing courses and textbooks for students of all ages and abilities, and many teachers base their courses on topics students select themselves.

Teaching L2 writing

6 Focus on genre

- Teachers who take a genre orientation to writing instruction look beyond subject content, composing processes and textual forms to see writing as attempts to communicate with readers. They are concerned with teaching learners how to use language patterns to accomplish coherent, purposeful prose

- The central belief here is that we don't just write, we write something to achieve some purpose: it is a way of getting something done.

Teaching L2 writing

Toward a synthesis:

A synthesis ensures that learners have an adequate understanding of the **Process** of text creation; the **Purpose** of writing and how to express these in effective ways through formal and rhetorical text choice; and the **contexts** within which texts are composed and read and which give them meaning.

Hyland K, 2003, Second Language writing, p1-30 CPU

Task 3

Please read the samples for writing classes for students of Chinese studies at SEAS.

- What are the rationales behind the designing of these classes?
- What writing abilities are aimed to develop for these classes?

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