

UNIT 2 LEARNING AND TEACHING MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE SKILLS

2.6.2 Samples of writing activities

Writing practice should provide students opportunities for

- Reinforcing what has been learnt orally
- Providing samples of the kind of writing we want to teach
- Encouraging free-expressions by reducing the amount of control over what the learners write.

The activities listed below are graded in terms of complexity, they range from the less difficult to the more complex ones. Most of these activities require an individual task but it is also possible to let students work in pairs or groups when we ask them for peer correction and comparing different versions.

Here is a list of the most commonly used activities:

- Copying (in a meaningful way): ask students to copy set of items or complete drawings/maps with given words
- Sequencing/Re-ordering from a mix set: ask students to arrange words/sentences given in a scrambled order to reconstruct sentences /paragraphs/texts;
- Completion exercises: ask students to complete a text by filling in the gaps with words/phrases/clauses provided in a scrambled list.
- Short reports/Parallel writing: Provide students a text as model. Give them some ideas/clues/key words about the content and ask them to write a similar text.
- Reproduction: (Dicto-Comp) ask students to listen to a text several times, then ask them to reproduce it as accurately as possible though they can use their own words too. Students may be allowed to take notes during the final reading. Teacher can write key words or phrases on the board to remind students the main ideas or linking words and sequences devices to help them with a structural “skeleton”;
- Wh questions: Ask students open questions related to the comprehension of the content.
- Guided summary:
 - a. Give students a text and ask to read it. Provide them two or three summaries of the same text to decide which one is the most appropriate according to the main ideas presented and the different lengths.
 - b. Give students another text, ask to read it and answer some questions. Provide them a list of linkers and ask them to summarize the text using their answers and the linkers provided.
- Note taking:
 - a. Present students both a text and a set of notes to detect the devices used (omission of pronouns, auxiliary verbs, articles, linkers; use of numerals, symbols, abbreviations
 - b. Ask students to take notes while listening to a passage or while reading a text and ask them to re-write a text.
- Expanding notes: Give students some notes on a chosen topic and ask them to write the complete text.
- Summarizing: Give students a text and ask them to summarize it providing them instructions about the length (number of words)

- Compositions/essays and reports/free writing on a given topic:
 - a. Working out basic ideas/brainstorming: ask students to write in form of a diagram all the words/phrases linked to a given key word relevant for the topic they have to develop. Then ask them to organize their notes underlining them in different ways according to the paragraph they decide to fit them in.
 - b. Making a first draft of the text (Compositions/essays and reports/free writing) you need to write: First of all tell students that at this stage it is not necessary to take care of style and correctness. Ask student to write a first version organized as follows:
 1. Introduction
 2. Development (decide the number of paragraphs students have to write and explain them that each paragraph should develop one idea.)
 3. Conclusion.
 - c. Developing the content coherently: ask students now to gather the ideas on the same point of the topic into the same paragraph. To help them it could be useful to ask them to give a title for each paragraph.
 - d. Editing: tell students that this last step is meant to check grammar, spelling and cohesion. Make sure students understand that at this final stage using dictionaries (either bilingual or monolingual) will help them to check their written production and that a number of checks should always be done. Tell them to look out for:
 - Grammar mistakes
 - Proper use of lexis and syntax
 - Spelling mistakes