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TRAINING SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT FOR MASTERING WRITTEN SPEECH IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES: LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT CREATION

Ключевые слова: письменная речь, навыки письма, языковая среда, система упражнений, предварительный этап, три основных этапа.

Письменный и разговорный язык представляют собой разные формы общения, каждая из которых имеет свою признанную зону действия и особенности. Проанализировав теоретические работы по психологии устной и письменной речи, авторы разработали систему упражнений для освоения студентами навыков письма и создания, таким образом, своего рода языковой среды. Система упражнений по развитию производительных профессиональных навыков письма, которую мы практикуем в преподавании английского языка на кафедре иностранных языков в профессиональной коммуникации в КНИТУ охватывает предварительный этап (для начинающих) и три основных этапа. В рамках представленной системы, студентов обучают правописанию; построению простых предложений и соединению их в сложные; оформлению их в абзацы; написанию непрерывных текстов.

Keywords: written language, writing skills, language environment, system of exercises, preliminary stage, three basic stages.

Written and spoken languages are different forms of communication, each having its recognized area of operation and specific features. Having analyzed the theoretical works on psychology of oral speech and writing the authors worked out a system of exercises for the students to master writing skills, thus creating a kind of language environment. The system of exercises in developing productive professional writing skills we practice in teaching English at the Department of Foreign Languages in Professional Communication at KNRTU embraces a preliminary stage (for the beginners) and three basic stages, the third stage including four steps. Within the system presented, the students are taught spelling; constructing simple sentences and joining them into compound and complex ones; paragraph writing; making up continuous composition.

Writing has become an indispensable component of modern society. As civilization becomes more complex and greater quantities of information have to be stored and transmitted the written word will become more indispensable than it is already. Thus, writing is one of the important types of communicative activities.

It is also an important means of instruction (the act, practice, or profession of instructing [14.]). It serves to reinforce and consolidate the other language skills: speaking, audition and reading. Proficiency in expressing one's thoughts in written form promotes proficiency in the use of the spoken language.

At the same time, productive writing is an independent speech activity and should be taught as a skill in its own right [6; 8; 9; 10].

One should bear in mind that written and spoken language are different forms of communication, each having its recognized area of operation and specific features. By their very nature the skills of writing and speaking vary in the demands they make on the communicator.

The comparison of the two types of communicative activity clearly shows their psychological and linguistic differences which have been pointed out and discussed by many scholars [1; 3; 4; 5; 7].

In speech there is mutual human contact; you are continuously influenced by your partner, while writing you are on your own; there is no interaction; no reactions from others.

When speaking one is directly addressing one or more people present; when writing you get no immediate linguistic or visual feedback to know whether your communicative efforts are successful.

Speaking may rely on the situational context to make referents explicit. Listeners may infer from the situational context a great deal of semantic information to increase and intensify what they derive from the language.

Written language tends to be out of situational context. The writer must make referents and antecedents explicit, he must create contexts through the language to replace those which are not present.

In conversational situations extra-lingual elements are of great importance. The speech situation permits a larger variety of means of expression. We can often use gestures and facial expressions to help when language fails us; indeed, a frown, the raising of an eyebrow, a wave of the hand are really units of 'words' in the spoken language. Also are pauses, laughing, etc.

But in writing we have to search for the exact words, phrase, idiom, definite structures of sentences, paragraphs, continuous composition that will represent our thoughts.

Then the time factor should also be taken into consideration. Speaking is at least five times faster than writing. The time of the speaker is limited by the nature of the speaking situation: speech is spontaneous.

The writer has time to choose his words; he may merely pause for a moment to think for an appropriate word or he may consult a dictionary. The writer has the opportunity for greater verbal diversity and chooses to vary his expression. Writing allows time for reflection. You may perfect your writing by editing what you have written to make sure you have said exactly what you wished to say.

It would be wrong to think that the skill to write will come by itself, that it will transfer automatically from other language skills such as speaking or reading.

As it is generally recommended the ability to write is the most difficult of the language abilities to acquire.

Writing involves: 1) the ability to share letters of the alphabet (graphics); 2) knowledge of the right combinations of letters (spelling); 3) skill in expressing oneself through the written word (composition).

A student learns to write correctly and freely: a) by encountering correct forms of language; b) by imitating correct forms of language; c) by practicing certain correct forms of language; d) consciously analyzing certain faults of language he makes and consciously trying to eliminate these faults; e) by awareness of certain rules which describe how the language works.

Writing is a powerful means in mastering a foreign language. Underestimation of writing leads to poor results in language learning. Throughout the language experience writing offers a means for ensuring total student participation on an individual basis in developing and improving his skills of listening, understanding, reproducing and improving [10;11;12;13].

The writing program treats first those aspects of language which occur in the speaking and reading programs and which may be effectively complimented by practice in writing. This skill requires concentrated efforts and instruction. In learning to write students need a special system to follow. Such system is offered by Mano Syngham, the director of the University Center for Innovation in Teaching and Education (UCITE) and an adjunct associate professor of physics at Case Western Reserve University. [15].

Samuel Johnson, an English literary critic, poet and lexicographer of the Enlightenment epoch (18th century) was the author of an oft-quoted saying that “no man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money” [16]. Saying so, he just supported the widespread belief that writing is so intrinsically unrewarding that it requires a powerful external incentive to overcome one’s reluctance to get on with it. Really, most people do not face the strong and immediate pressure to write even in their native language, to say nothing about writing in a foreign language. In this case the incentive has to be really great. And yet – knowing about the thorough need our students may come across in their professional life we have to supply our students both with incentives and skills in productive writing.

First of all, writing should be productive and in itself it should bear incentive, goal and positive result. Most of us like the idea of writing comfortably in the future—say the next day or week or during breaks in the academic year. We also like having written. What most of us find extremely distasteful and try to avoid at all costs is sitting down right now and starting to write. When confronted with having to do so, other tasks such as arranging one’s desk, having another cup of coffee, checking the news, even sorting paper clips suddenly become extraordinarily attractive. For most of us, the problem with writing is actually to start doing so. Hence the secret to productive writing is to develop strategies to overcome that initial barrier. What follows are some suggestions for doing so. Mano Syngham notes that

writing, like most creative endeavors, is highly idiosyncratic. So any attempt to prescribe the ingredients of successful writing is likely to evoke protests over the acts of omission and commission, and the usefulness of the method in the first place. Mano Syngham managed to sort out the writing habits of successful writers, and formulate the system of mastering productive writing [15]. The system includes seven rules that seem to be quite effective in working with foreign language learners. **Rule 1.** The first rule is to write regularly every day. There are a few people who are successful in writing, but most people become far more productive when they write daily, even for short times. The best way to do this is to set a realistic daily quota of writing. The quota could be measured in terms of time (mostly 90 minutes of writing time), but it could also be a page or word quota. George Bernard Shaw, for example, wrote a minimum of five pages each day, regardless of whatever else was going on in his life. Another reason that it is important to write regularly is that the act of writing generates new ideas, while not writing them down causes the ideas in our mind to evaporate and disappear. There is a dialectic relationship between the words on paper (or computer screen) and our thoughts. As E. M. Forster once said, “How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?”. Getting daily quota done early in the day brings many psychological benefits. It makes you feel smugly virtuous and sets a good mood for the rest of the day. Furthermore, the act of writing generates so many new ideas that you become impatient to get back to them. This makes you much more efficient about completing routine tasks so that you can return to your writing.

Rule 2: It is important to strike a good balance between reading and writing. We need to read to be able to keep up with the scholarly literature and also to benefit from seeing how good writers put their ideas into words. But we can easily use reading as a way of avoiding writing. Endlessly collecting information suppresses the guilt that comes with not writing, because we feel that we are still doing scholarly work. This pitfall can be avoided by producing some writing output for everything we read. It is amazing how this can result in new ideas and new prose. A lot of these notes form the foundation for new writing projects, with ready-made text available from which to start.

Rule 3. It is well known that good writers rewrite and rewrite and then rewrite some more. Getting in the habit of critiquing, editing, and polishing our work is essential if we are to get better output. But in order to work up the enthusiasm to revise, it is important to learn to like what you write so that you look forward to reading your earlier drafts. It is only when you like your own writing that you want to make it even better and enjoy polishing it. This phenomenon may be a consequence of how our minds work. Contrary to popular belief, we do not usually think in the words and sentences of ordinary language. What we manipulate in our minds are symbols for concepts (known as ‘mentalese’), and writing our ideas down is an act of translation from that symbolic language. But while mentalese contains our thoughts in the form of a complex tapestry, writing

necessarily is linear and can only be created one thread at a time.

Hence it should not be surprising that our first attempt at expressing ideas should look so, well, threadbare. It is only by repeatedly rewriting that we create new threads and interweave them to approach the level of complexity that the ideas originally formed in our minds. Psychological development, according to Vygotsky, does not precede instruction, but essentially depends on it. Psychologically, writing is not a paper-and-pencil application of verbal functions already developed through oral speech, but a creation of new psychological systems which do not emerge spontaneously and but become possible only because of systematic instruction. In a broader sense, the mastery of reading and writing is the road to a higher form of consciousness. Symbolization, which in oral speech occurs spontaneously and unconsciously, is mastered anew on a conscious and purposeful level in written speech. Psychologists advise that when writing we should have two different mindsets. One is an accepting mode in which every idea, as well as the words we use to express it, is seen as wonderful and original and worth putting down. It is only during rewrites that we should switch to a critical mode, examining what we enthusiastically wrote in the accepting mode and checking for weaknesses, flaws, consistency, originality, style, tone, and word choice.

Rule 4. Another tip to begin writing is, do not start with a blank page but always be continuing something. Always start with something you have already written. It is easier to build on existing writing than to begin something totally new, and just reading what you have written acts as a stimulus to further writing.

Rule 5. Then there are those exhilarating days when writing seems easy and you don't want to stop. But even when the words flow out like a gusher, don't write so much that you end up exhausted. Doing so may make you feel good for the moment but makes it hard to start again the next day when you cannot recapture the muse. It is recommended that you should not continue writing until you reach a good stopping point, but rather end abruptly and leave the writing unfinished. This may seem counterintuitive, but when you stop in the middle of an idea or section or even a sentence that suspended thought stays in the forefront of your mind, so that you cannot wait to begin writing again in order to complete the thought. George Bernard Shaw had a habit of stopping after completing his daily quota of exactly five pages, even if he were in the middle of a sentence. It was not simply a sign of his eccentricity. He knew what he did. A big obstacle to starting to write is not knowing what you are going to do first. Stopping at a point where you know exactly what needs to be written when you next sit down is an excellent strategy for overcoming that barrier.

Rule 5. It is helpful to have many different writing projects at different stages of completion (such as new text, rewrites, editing, note making, evidence collecting, polishing) going on simultaneously. If you have work at various stages, you can always find something congenial to do for any level of tiredness or creativity.

Rule 6. Once you start writing, it is easy to shift to those things that require greater effort. Even if you have just one writing project going on, you can start by doing different things with it, depending on your mood. Start writing by completing any thought left unrealized, and then shift to creating new writing.

Rule 7. On uncreative days, it is best to start with what you can write about, not with what you need to write. For example, make notes on something you have read, which is always fairly easy to do and usually generates new ideas and connections. But suppose that you absolutely have to get working on something distasteful. Start with the part of it that is most congenial to you or the most mindlessly routine. Once you have written something, it becomes much easier to add to and improve upon it. Even amongst those who feel they have something new and interesting to say, there is a gulf between those who want to write and those who actually do. The former tend to think that having well-thought-out ideas and the proper mood are necessary preconditions for writing. The latter realize that if you simply start writing something, the fleshed-out ideas, and even the mood, emerge from the process.

The system of exercises in developing productive professional writing skills we practice in teaching English at the Department of Foreign Languages in Professional Communication at KNRTY embraces a preliminary stage (for the beginners) and three basic stages, the third stage including four steps.

The preliminary stage of writing is training in the formation of letters. At this stage the students are taught spelling.

The first stage is sentence construction. It consists of exercises in training the word order of a simple sentence in English. It may take a form of completing sentences by adding or substituting words according to the pattern given or by answering questions. Simple sentences are joined into compound and complex ones.

The second stage is paragraph writing. Several sentences are linked together to form a paragraph. The sentences making a paragraph should be closely related and deal with the same topic. The students are taught to join simple, compound and complex sentences logically to form a continuous paragraph. A well-constructed paragraph must possess unity, correct sequence of thought and variety of length and construction in the sentences which comprise it.

The third stage – continuous composition. Two or more paragraphs logically linked constitute a continuous composition. This stage embraces several steps.

The first step gives students early practice in continuous composition by instructing them to write short compositions on given subjects. This step enables the students to write descriptions of things and events.

The second step enables students to write reproductions. Reproduction is a controlled composition in which the ideas are supplied and the students have to remember correct English ways of expressing them. The students should listen attentively to the text read by the teacher or to some kind of audio text, and then write the gist of it using the words and expressions from the

original text given by the teacher or memorized. The students are taught to reproduce a text (or any piece of information). There are different types of reproduction. In some reproductions the students are supposed to reproduce the main facts using the key words; in others the students should not only reproduce the main points but express their own attitudes, their own understanding and their criticism.

The third step is review and summary writing. A summary is the expression in a condensed form of the principal content of any piece of writing. The students are taught how to summarize, how to write a review. Giving a list of reading matter is a very valuable exercise in the process of learning a foreign language. It is an excellent introduction to free expression as it supplies the matter and much of the vocabulary and allows the students to concentrate on form.

The fourth step – essays, composition, guided and free reports. Before writing a report some preparative work should precede. The students are given detailed instructions how to write an outline. Besides, the teacher provides his students with extra vocabulary on the topic. At this stage the students are taught to express their ideas and thoughts in writing.

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