Session Aims

- Why focus on writing?
- Classroom routines / Microwriting
- Practical ideas for different ages and levels

Are we writing enough?

In many British Council centres a minimum of 2 writings per term is suggested. Supposing our average student is B1/B2 level, around 150 words would be expected. If these writings are redrafted, over 3 terms students would write 1800 words.

In contrast, a slow speed of speech such as audiobook reading is set at 150-160 words per minute. The 1800 words students write over a year would only equate to 12 minutes of speaking time.

The Craft of writing

- Getting the grammar right
- Having a range of vocabulary
- Punctuating meaningfully
- Using the conventions of layout correctly, for example in letters
- Spelling accurately
- Using a range of sentence structures
- Linking ideas and information across sentences to develop a topic
- Developing and organizing the content clearly and convincingly

Hedge (2005) pg 10

Product Approach

1. See model
2. Analyse model
3. Practise parts of the text type
4. Produce own text on different topic
5. Teacher reads and provides feedback

Process

▼ Prewriting
Composing / Drafting

Revising

Editing

Publishing

Tribble, Writing OUP (1996)

Exploiting Classroom routines

Late students - Ask students to write an excuse for why they are late on small sheets of paper. Remember to get them to review/extend/self-correct/peer correct and publish in a later activity or on the wall around the class. These can be used for fast finishers or a reading task.

Taking the register - Use this ‘dead time’ to do some speedwriting.

Correcting / setting homework - Ask students to write in full sentences or for higher level in taught note form.

Games – Many old and well used games can be adapted for writing practice.

Recording vocabulary – Ask students to write example sentences definitions or paraphrase.

Practical Activities

Speedwriting – Students write as much as they can in a short period of time, the focus being on writing fluency. Peer or Self error correction can then be used to practise/review a variety of grammatical functions. For example, what did you do at the weekend? (past) What are you doing this weekend? (future) What would you do if I gave you a million pounds? (hypotheticals)

Pair writing – Often done with a time limit students write a story in pairs. When the teacher claps their hands they swap writing duties. This process encourages review and means that writing is being continuously published.

Team writing (Describing the picture) Students are put in groups of three or four. The teacher asks a question and dictates some parameters, for example, your answer should be two sentences. The teacher then calls out a students’ number so that one student from each group has to come forward and write the answer on a mini-whiteboard. Students then check with their answer with their team and show the teacher. The first team with the correct answer wins a point. This is fun and communicative, it incorporates many functions of collaborative process writing.

Writing games – Use machine gun, knots and crosses or blockbusters to get students to work on register and paraphrasing in the context of a piece of writing.

Proverbs – For higher levels, a great exercise for structuring paragraphs is to get students to write a topic sentence – paraphrase – give an example – give an opinion. This takes little time and trains students well for writing Cambridge style essays.

Publishing – For shorter writing exercises, such as, Minisagas, Haikus, 50 word reviews, jokes, why not publish on Padlet or Edmodo.

Diaries and learner diaries – Different focus on language (Taught / Personal) Decide with the class whether to publish or not.