



«COMMUNICATIVE WRITING FOR THE ELT CLASSROOM»

Rashidov Erkin,

the english teacher of Vobkent district vocational school

Abstract: *This article is designed to complement the webinar by providing additional information about how you can bring communicative writing into your classroom.*

Key words: *the communicative approach, ELT world, synonymous with speaking, social media*

In the years since the communicative approach was first developed it has undoubtedly become the dominant force in the ELT world. Its purpose was to make the tasks that learners undertake in classrooms more meaningful and more reflective of their real lives. However, the concept of communicative learning seems to have become synonymous with speaking activities. Writing, often seen as something more solitary and silent, has often been pushed aside. At times, due to the way lessons in coursebooks can be structured, writing tasks can get rushed through at the end of a class or left for homework. Students are also sometimes reluctant to write. They might feel that it is more difficult than other tasks, they might be worried about their mistakes being preserved forever on paper or they might just have the impression that it is a bit boring.

So, how can we encourage our students to love writing? How can we help students communicate clearly through their writing? And how can we fit writing into the concept of a communicative classroom?

The types of writing that students both need and want to do have undoubtedly changed since the communicative approach was first proposed in the 1970s and 1980s and, as teachers, the writing we do in class should reflect this. Find out what



writing your students do now (both in English and their first language) and what they think they would like or need to be able to write in the future. Don't be afraid to use technology and even social media to encourage writing.

Setting up a class Facebook or What's App group can be a great and organic way to get students writing without them even realising they are doing it. These types of informal discussions can be a relaxed way to build up confidence and fluency, and it is often a medium that students feel more at home in when writing. You can even use them as a diagnostic tool, to see what areas of writing your students may need more support in.

Other useful technology tools are online noticeboards such as Padlet or Jamboard. You can use these as a way for students share ideas as homework or even in class as a written alternative to a class discussion. Students can then read and respond to their classmates' ideas.

In class, it is important to focus on the process of writing, and this is definitely an area where students can work collaboratively. For example, students can spend class time brainstorming together, sharing ideas and discussing how to organise a piece of writing. Then, after writing, teachers can guide them in 'peer correction'. This is the process of students reading each other's work and giving feedback. It is often more successful to do this by focusing on a narrow range of criteria or giving learners a checklist of things to look for. For example, depending on the type of writing you might ask them: Is there a topic sentence? Have they used a range of adjectives? Is there anything you want to know more about? What do you like best about your partner's writing? Is there anything you don't understand? Students benefit from both having the space to share and discuss their ideas before putting pen to paper, and also having the opportunity to read their peers' writing.

Communicative writing ideas



Chain stories

Students each write a sentence (or more) of a story before passing it to the next student to continue. You can use a prompt, such as giving them a first line, showing them a picture, or asking them to listen to a piece of music, to get them started. Once the story has made its way back to the first student, ask them to take responsibility for it and take it away to edit, before displaying the completed stories in class for students to read. This activity also works well online using the chat box.

Jigsaw writing

For longer pieces of writing, such as essays or reports, ask students to discuss and plan their writing in groups, before giving them each a section or paragraph to write. Then they can put all their parts together to complete it. This is a good way to really focus on clear organisation with one idea for each paragraph and breaks down longer writing into more manageable chunks.

Pen pals

Having a real audience, outside of the classroom, can be very motivating. Consider setting up a pen pal scheme for your class. Pen pals don't have to be far away in different countries. If you have a class that is a similar age or level, arrange for the students to write to each other (or find another teacher at your school with a similar class). At the end of term you could even organise a party for everyone to meet!

Letter/email writing

If there is a task to write a letter or email, ask the members of your class to swap their writing with another student, who can then write a reply. For example, if they are writing a job application letter, another student can reply to say if they



are giving them an interview or not (and why). It could also lead to role-playing an interview, a great way to integrate writing with other skills.

Write about your partner

When setting writing for your students to complete, think about if it might work better if the students write about their partner rather than themselves. For example, if the task is ‘write about your best friend’, by changing it to ‘write about your partner’s best friend’ you can then introduce a speaking stage where they need to interview their partner and make notes (an important writing skill!). Then, after writing, their partner will be motivated to read and peer review the work to check if it is accurate.

The silent classroom

How about conducting a whole class through writing? Or at least a section of it! A fun way to get your students writing and communicating in a natural or fluent way is to introduce the idea of a silent classroom. Encourage them to write notes to each other or use mini whiteboards to communicate. The teacher can use the whiteboard, or the whole class could use online messaging or a website like Padlet. It’s a novel way to remove the pressure some students feel when it comes to writing tasks and mirrors how they might communicate online.

By integrating writing with other skills, exploring a range of genres that relate to students’ real world needs and interests, and encouraging a collaborative approach to writing, you can help remove the daunting feeling students sometimes have when confronted with writing. Undoubtedly, writing has an important role in modern life, and it deserves to take its place as central to a communicative classroom.



References:

1. How does technology affect language learning at an early age?
Binnur Gelc Ilter – Procedia:Social and Behavioral Sciences,
www.sciencedirect.com 2015 - p.312-315.
2. Technologies for foreign language learning: a review of
technology types and their effectiveness E.M.Golonka, A.R.Bowles,
V.M.Frank, D.L.Richardson, S.Rveynik – Routledge,
www.researchgate.com August 26 2015 – p.73-81.
3. Technology tools to engage students in the classroom,
TeachThought Staff, Sara McGuire - www.teachthought.com April 29,
2020.
4. The use of technology in English language learning Alqahtani
Mofareh – www.scholink.org August 30 2019 – p.169.

a