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E. Kozhakhmet¹, S. Tulepova²

^{1,2} Suleyman Demirel University, Kaskelen, Kazakhstan

THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITING SKILLS FOR EFL LEARNERS: COMMON ERRORS AND WAYS OF IMPROVING

Abstract. In order to attain specific language mastery, it is required to obtain four major skills of language such as writing, reading, listening, and speaking. One of the most complicated and highly required skills among all these four skills is writing, and since it is considered to be difficult, it is impossible to acquire this skill in a natural way for EFL (English as a foreign language) learners. Moreover, it is mostly accepted as the skill that has many complexities thus playing a determining role in linguistic output. For example, EFL learners frequently face difficulties in writing connected with such language components as vocabulary, grammatical structure, coherence and cohesion, spelling and punctuation. The following article aims to emphasize the significance of writing in learning a foreign language. It also attempts to highlight some common errors in students' writings and to suggest extensive reading as an essential solution and effective way of developing writing skills.

Keywords: writing skills, EFL, importance, errors, solutions, extensive reading.

Аңдатпа. Белгілі бір тілді меңгеру үшін жазу, оқу, тыңдау және сөйлеу сияқты төрт негізгі тіл дағдысын алу қажет. Осы төрт дағдының ішіндегі ең күрделі және жоғары талап етілетін дағдылардың бірі жазу болып табылады және ол қиын деп есептелетіндіктен, шет (ағылшын тілі) тілін үйренушілер үшін бұл дағдыны табиғи жолмен меңгеру мүмкін емес. Сонымен қатар, ол негізінен көптеген күрделілігі бар дағды ретінде қабылданады, осылайша тілдік нәтижеде анықтаушы рөл атқарады. Мысалы, шет тілін үйренушілер лексика, грамматикалық құрылым, үйлесімділік пен үйлесімділік, емле және пунктуация сияқты тілдік компоненттермен байланысты жазуда қиындықтарға жиі кездеседі. Келесі мақала шет тілін үйренудегі жазудың маңыздылығын көрсетуге бағытталған. Ол сондай-ақ студенттердің жазбаларындағы кейбір жиі кездесетін қателерді бөліп көрсетуге және жазу дағдыларын дамытудың маңызды шешімі және тиімді әдісі ретінде кең оқуды ұсынуға тырысады.

Түйін сөздер: жазу дағдылары, ағылшын тілі шет тілі ретінде, маңыздылық, қателер, шешімдер, кең көлемді оқу.

Аннотация. Чтобы овладеть конкретным языком, необходимо получить четыре основных языковых навыка, таких как письмо, чтение, аудирование и разговорная речь. Одним из самых сложных и крайне необходимых навыков среди всех этих четырех навыков является письмо, и, поскольку оно считается трудным, невозможно приобрести этот навык естественным путем для изучающих английский язык как иностранный. Более того, это в основном считается навыком, который имеет много сложностей, поэтому играет определяющую роль в лингвистическом выводе. Например, изучающие английский языка часто сталкиваются с трудностями при письме, связанными с такими языковыми компонентами, как словарный запас, грамматическая структура и связка, орфография и пунктуация. Данная статья призвана подчеркнуть важность письма в изучении иностранного языка. В нем также делается попытка выделить некоторые распространенные ошибки в письменных работах учащихся и предложить обширное чтение в качестве важного решения и эффективного способа развития навыков письма.

Ключевые слова: навыки письма, английский язык, важность, ошибки, решения, обширное чтение.

1. Introduction

Writing is considered as one of the most complicated skills among all four skills in mastering English as a foreign language. Also, it can be accepted as essential element of learning EFL and effective instrument to develop thinking and learning abilities. The procedure of writing is very extensive, which includes such steps as planning, writing a first draft, revising and editing the last version. Besides, it is accepted as a final and crucial stage which clearly shows the learners' academic literacy progress in language learning. In EFL classrooms writing plays an indispensable role where language learners use this skill as an instrument to transmit their thoughts, represent viewpoints, and analysis. Moreover, it is a key aspect of being successful in both professional and academic spheres of life.

As it was mentioned before, writing in EFL is extremely complicated skill to master, especially, at the initial levels of language acquisition. Consequently, language learners face different kinds of obstacles on the way to ideally accomplish this skill. Apart from the importance and relevance, there are noticeable errors that need to be regulated thus specifying the ways of improving writing skill. Therefore, the current article is aimed at highlighting not only the significance of writing skills but also some frequent errors that EFL students commit in their writing in more detail, including parallelism, sentence structure, transitions and conjunctions, cohesion and coherence, and consider the ways of coping with these difficulties.

2. Main part

As Nofal [1] stated, EFL learners are mostly anxious about the exterior facets such as grammar errors, word spelling, selecting an appropriate vocabulary in their written assignments. However, the complexity of writing is viewed in Al-Samadani's [2] work as a skill which demands not only grammar, spelling and vocabulary knowledge, but also such core-aspects as punctuation, capitalization, organization, planning abilities, and writing style. Writing in EFL is accepted as an active ability in both learning and teaching. It is also considered to be as an important way of expressing ideas in target language. Since the thinking process is an essential element of writing, it should be distinct to consider and the language must be comprehensible. However, a number of students from EFL classrooms find it difficult to develop their writing skills in consequence of errors found in their written works.

Errors made by students can be applied as an instrument to identify how learners make progress in their writing performances. According to Heaton [3] writing is such complex and crucial skill to teach and to learn, thus demanding not only grammatical excellence but also knowledge of stylistic and linguistic devices. Wilson and Glazier [4] argued that writing should be viewed as starting point with short words and covering levels of structure that connect phrases, paragraphs, and sentences.

The ability of using the appropriate set of knowledge, skills and competencies in writing is critical to good writing. Moreover, different aspects of knowledge of a genre or a text, any skill to establish, transfer, use and apply genres in a professional environment, include various competencies. Murray [5] has created such key principles to writing as selecting appropriate topic and idea, connection of ideas, clarity, evidences, readability and meaningfulness. In this regard, Ferris [6] enumerated common errors in EFL learners' writings, while Dulay [7] argued that errors are an imperfection on the part of the student in their speech and writing. Below are some of the frequent writing errors that EFL learners commit at the elementary stages of mastering writing skills.

Omission errors

Dulay [7] noted that missing a word in the sentence can be described by the insufficient knowledge of grammar or lack of practice as in the examples:

*She the Chemistry teacher in a new school (the correct phrase is: "She is the Chemistry teacher in a new school ", the linking verb «is» is omitted).

-*Where... you live? (Where do you live?)

-*I am ... student (I am a student)

Addition errors

In comparison with omission, improper word can be described as an addition of one or more unnecessary words. As Dulay [7] described, this term can be characterized by the addition of an element that is not necessary in a well-structured statement. For instance: Greg didn't know *a* her name (well-formed sentence must be "Greg didn't know her name", the article "a" is not necessary).

Replacement errors

**He very liked it (He liked it very much).*

Grammar errors

**She made me to do it (She made me do it),*

**I must to go (I must go);*

Written and spoken language differences

Al-Fadda [8] noted that the major issues faced by EFL learners are distinguishing differences between written and oral language, avoiding grammatical errors, containing verb-subject agreement, and connecting statements into a single paragraph. Moreover, he specifies that one of the significant foundations of writing is the students' abilities to access and evaluate relevant links to connect different ideas and attitudes so that they can show viewpoints.

In this context, Haiwen [9] thoroughly studied the current state of teaching writing in English language in Chinese colleges and identified that the writing abilities of college were not satisfactory. Apart from this work, similar study was conducted by Nofal [1] in Jordan University in Philadelphia where senior EFL students' main reasons of drawbacks in their writings were examined and explored thoroughly. In addition, the researcher emphasizes that it is hard for students to sufficiently communicate ideas in their writing.

Extensive Reading as the way of improving writing skills.

Many findings show that students who started learning language had shown poor performance in their writings in the early stages, and over time errors were eliminated by using various effective approaches aimed to improve writing skills. According to Hyland [10], EFL teachers always search for the solution to numerous problems in order to develop students' writing skills.

For example, Ho [11] attempted to improve 200 upper and lower grade students' writing skills and change their viewpoints toward writing assignments. As a result, six primary school teachers, three of which from high school, have implemented an innovative writing program which lasted two months in their schools. Similar to this study, Storch [12] studied the influence of cooperation on the accuracy of grammatical structure through different assignments: a close practice, conversion of the text, and a construction of the task. One of the main benefits of this method was that by working in small groups students had a great possibility to exchange ideas of their choices of grammatical structure. In spite of the fact that it was time consuming to accomplish the assignments in collaboration, it helped to produce more proper written works in comparison with working individually. The results of compositions done by groups of students were more concise and syntactically complex, and general performance was accurate.

Many authors in various branches of science such as psychology, education, and especially in linguistic study has given definitions to the concept of extensive reading, relying on their experience. As Day and Bamford [13] stated, extensive reading has been described as language learning technique

where students read much by selecting materials independently. Palmer [14] formed the notion of extensive reading which is described as an activity of reading longer materials and texts suitable to students' language competency. Furthermore, it was claimed by Richards and Schmidt [15] that ER is aimed to read texts to acquire the primary idea of what has been read.

Moreover, there were different studies which have shown the connection between ER and writing performance. In current researchers' studies it is distinguished that it can be helpful for students to integrate writing with reading in English classrooms. As Graham and Hebert [16] stated, integrating writing with extensive reading can stimulate learners to write about the materials they read and help connecting ideas concerning their readings, knowledge, understandings and thoughts. According to Tsai [17], with the help of connecting these two skills, learners can have possibilities to build their second language vocabulary and be able to construct grammar and so on.

In addition to strengthening learners' vocabulary and grammar knowledge, Nuttal [18] defined extensive reading as a great technique to improve their reading speed and to form habits on reading. In this regard, Salehi et al. [19] investigated the impacts of ER on foreign language students' writing abilities at Iranian college. According to the results, it was identified that extensive reading influences positively writing skills of college EFL students. The other research studied by Hany [20] has clearly demonstrated that reading is an achievable instrument for increasing Egyptian second language students' writing performance. Alkhaldeh [21] investigated the Jordanian secondary school students' perceptions of connections between extensive reading technique and developing writing abilities. According to the results of the investigation, it was established that L2 learners can have an opportunity to improve their thinking, vocabulary, and the ways of structuring sentences through ER. In order to explore the relationships between the terms of writing and reading, an investigation was conducted by Yoshimura [22] to study the advantages of integrating writing with extensive reading. Furthermore, Dennis [23] conducted a research which supplies the effectiveness of perception of reading extensively on developing writing abilities in the second language, and provides some effective elements cooperate with extensive reading and writing in L2. The issue raised in the investigation was about post-secondary Korean students who make an effort to ideally write in English. The findings of this study imply that it is necessary for learners to read many complicated readings despite these texts might not have relevance as much as it was believed earlier.

All above-mentioned works done by different researchers indicate to the benefits of extensive reading as an effective instrument in improving EFL learner's writing skills that can motivate them in improving their written works.

3. Conclusion

Generally, writing is one of the most significant but complicated skills that foreign language learner should master. Along with various issues, its role in

language development is considerably influential: it encourages students to read and think critically. It promotes independent learning. In addition, writing is considered to be a very useful aid for both teaching and learning. This helps teachers to realize their actions and experiences. Thus, it is beneficial for general communication, learning and teaching language. Due to the importance of these terms, this skill has become a very essential need for EFL classrooms. Though, learning to write comes with different challenges that arise from different perspectives on writing. These issues depend on various factors which are language and cultural environment, students, teachers and the learning context. To sum up, only when all the obstacles and difficulties mentioned in this article are considered, the language learners will be able to develop writing skills and perform tasks of any complexity with high quality.

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