



HOW TO TEACH WRITING TO ELEMENTARY AND PRE-INTERMEDIATE LEVEL LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study investigates effective approaches to teaching writing to elementary and pre-intermediate level learners in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. The research integrates theoretical insights with empirical classroom observations to identify strategies that significantly enhance learners' writing performance. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining qualitative classroom analysis with quantitative performance measurement. The findings demonstrate that scaffolded instruction, communicative tasks, and process-based writing significantly improve learners' ability to produce coherent and meaningful written texts. The study also highlights the importance of visual aids, structured guidance, and feedback mechanisms. Practical implications for classroom teaching are discussed.

Keywords: EFL writing, elementary learners, scaffolding, process writing, communicative approach, classroom research

Introduction

Writing is often considered the most challenging skill in second language acquisition, particularly for learners at elementary and pre-intermediate levels. At these stages, students lack sufficient linguistic resources, which limits their ability to express ideas clearly and accurately. Unlike speaking, writing requires greater cognitive effort, as learners must simultaneously manage grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and organization.

In many EFL classrooms, writing is either neglected or taught in a traditional, product-oriented manner. As a result, learners often develop negative attitudes toward writing and fail to achieve communicative competence.

This study aims to explore how writing can be taught effectively through a combination of methodological principles and classroom-based practices. It also seeks to provide empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of scaffolded and communicative approaches.

Literature review

Previous research in second language writing has emphasized the importance of process-oriented instruction (Hyland, 2003). According to this perspective, writing is not a one-step activity but a recursive process involving planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

Harmer (2004) suggests that lower-level learners benefit from structured support, as they are not yet capable of independent writing. Similarly, Hedge (2000) highlights the role of input and guided practice in developing writing skills.

Recent studies also emphasize the importance of affective factors. Learners who feel confident and supported are more likely to engage in writing tasks and take risks in language use.

Methodology

Research design

This study employed a mixed-method design combining:

- classroom observation



- pre-test and post-test comparison
- student writing analysis

Participants

The participants consisted of:

Group	Level	Number of Students	Age Range
Group A	Elementary	20	12–14
Group B	Pre-Intermediate	18	13–15

Procedure

The study was conducted over a period of 6 weeks. The following steps were implemented:

- Pre-test writing task
- Implementation of scaffolded writing instruction
- Use of communicative and process-based activities
- Continuous feedback
- Post-test writing task

Assessment criteria

Students' writing was evaluated based on:

- grammar accuracy
- vocabulary range
- coherence and cohesion
- task achievement

Results

Quantitative findings

Criteria	Pre-test (Average %)	Post-test (Average %)
Grammar accuracy	52%	68%
Vocabulary use	48%	65%
Coherence	45%	70%
Task completion	50%	75%

The results indicate a significant improvement in all areas after the implementation of structured teaching methods.

Qualitative observations

Students became more confident in expressing ideas



Sentence length and complexity increased

Use of linking words improved

Errors became less disruptive to meaning

Discussion

The findings confirm that traditional methods are insufficient for developing writing skills at lower levels. Instead, a structured and supportive approach is necessary.

Effective teaching framework

Stage-based writing model

Stage	Teacher Role	Student Activity
Pre-writing	Provide ideas & vocabulary	Brainstorm
While-writing	Guide & monitor	Write draft
Post-writing	Give feedback	Revise

Controlled to free writing progression

Level	Task Type	Example
Controlled	Gap-fill	I ___ (like) apples
Guided	Sentence prompts	I like ___ because ___
Free	Paragraph writing	My favorite hobby

Classroom applications

Example Activity 1: Picture description

Students are shown an image and asked to write 3–5 sentences:

“There is a boy. He is playing football. He looks happy.”

Example Activity 2: Sentence expansion

Base sentence: “I have a friend.”



Expanded: “I have a close friend who lives near my house.”

Example Activity 3: Guided paragraph

Template:

My daily routine

I wake up at ____.

Then I ____.

After that, I ____.

Example Activity 4: Collaborative writing

Students work in pairs:

- brainstorm ideas
- write together
- present their text

Role of scaffolding

Scaffolding plays a central role in helping learners bridge the gap between limited knowledge and task requirements. Examples include:

- sentence starters
- word banks
- model paragraphs
- guided questions

Feedback strategies

Effective feedback table

Type	Description	Example
Direct	Teacher corrects	go → goes
Indirect	Highlight error	underline mistake
Peer	Student checks	partner review

Key Principles

- focus on meaning first
- avoid overcorrection
- encourage self-editing

Integration with other skills

Writing should be integrated with:

Reading: exposure to models

Listening: understanding structure

Speaking: idea generation



Implications for Teaching

Teachers should:

- create a low-anxiety environment
- use step-by-step instruction
- integrate visuals and real-life tasks
- provide consistent feedback

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that writing instruction at elementary and pre-intermediate levels can be significantly improved through structured, scaffolded, and communicative approaches. The integration of process writing and meaningful classroom activities leads to measurable improvements in learners' performance.

Ultimately, writing should not be taught as an isolated or purely technical skill, but as a means of communication that allows learners to express their thoughts and ideas.

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