APPROACHES TO BUSINESS WRITING IN ESP CLASSROOM

N.Yu. Ishchuk
PhD, associate professor
Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University

The ability to write efficiently is crucial for successful performance both at university and in the workplace. Complex social activities like keeping records, engaging with customers, selling products, demonstrating learning and disseminating ideas largely depend on writing activity. Having strong written communication skills, one can get a competitive edge in the stiff job market, especially in the field of international economic relations due to the increasing role of economic leverage in the way states interact.

Mastering writing skills is very challenging. Expressing ideas through a piece of paper is for many times more complicated and frustrating than what it seems. For example, business writing can be confusing for university students because they often have a vague idea of the structure of different types of business documents; what grammar, punctuation, word choice, and sentence structure should be used; who the receiver is; what the receiver's expectations are; what cultural aspects should be taken into account when writing a message etc.

To improve students' written communication skills a teacher should apply an adequate approach depending on the students' language proficiency level, thus gaining the optimal result of teaching writing business documents and emails. In this study we will focus on the three most common approaches to writing:

1) a product approach;
2) a process approach and
3) a social-constructionist approach.

The product approach treats the text as a complete, finished product. In a product-based writing lesson we start with a model text, which may be presented along with reading comprehension tasks. Students analyse the organisation and language of that model, making generalisations and rules that they can use in their own writing. After some controlled practice exercises, they produce a piece of writing.

When using this approach to business letter writing, teacher may ask students to read a model letter, drawing students' attention to the importance of paragraphing and the language used [1]. After that, students may be asked to practise the language structures used in each part of a business letter, for instance, when making an inquiry:

1. Opening: "*We have seen your advertisement in last Sunday's Observer, and would be grateful if you would let us have details of...*".

2. Focus: "*We are a company which specializes in...*".

3. Action: "*Will you please send us your catalogue and price list for...*"

4. Closing: "*We are looking forward to hearing from you.*"

At the next stage students are to organize ideas because without a clear organizational pattern, the reader could become confused and lose interest.

Finally, students embark on writing a letter. Individually, they use the skills, structures and vocabulary they have been taught to produce the product; to show what they can do as fluent and competent users of the language [1].

The product approach is may be regarded as highly efficient when working with large classes, and teacher finds it easier to grade because the emphasis is on the form.

The process approach treats writing as a process that happens in a series of stages: prewriting (e.g. planning), writing (e.g. drafting, editing) and after writing (e.g. proofreading). In this approach the focus is on the steps involved in drafting and redrafting a piece of work [2.], therefore, a writing lesson may focus especially on only 1-2 of these stages – not every writing lesson ends with learners writing a complete text.

At the initial stage of relevance are a number of prewriting activities aiming at boosting the accuracy of students' writing performance:

1. Complete these sentences, using the prepositions of place.

2. Write *S* if the sentence is a complete sentence. Write *F* if the sentence is a fragment. Rewrite the fragments to make sentences.

3. Complete the sentences in this letter. Use the words below.

4. Edit the letter below.

Among the advantages of the process approach is the emphasis on the importance of writing in different styles for different audiences. Moreover, student collaboration is developed and feedback is given.

However, one of the main disadvantages of this approach is that it restricts spontaneity and range of writing activities.

The social-constructionist approach emphasizes the social aspects of writing, i.e. that there is a target reader who has particular needs from the text. The writer's purpose (e.g. to communicate information, to create the right impression) is also vitally important. The writer needs to be aware of and follow the norms and expectations of the professional community to which the writer belongs.

The language, which is seen as systems of linguistic features [3], used in business correspondence directly affects the way the recipient perceives the sender's message. A letter that starts with '*Dear Mr. Kamal*' or whatever is far more likely to be read than the one which starts with '*Dear Sir*'. Praising the other person's work by saying '*I found the information provided by your sales representative extremely useful*' or asking for something by using phrases like '*I would be grateful if you would...*', '*would you be willing...*', '*we hope you will be able to make us an offer within a fortnight from today's date*' may help establish long-term interpersonal relationships as well as achieve control in professional writing in different contexts.

On the other hand, sounding arrogant, demanding or overfamiliar and using bureaucratic language distances the recipient from making favourable decisions [4].

Regardless of the chosen approach, it is crucial to motivate students to write by providing a clear purpose or a reason to write. The topic for writing should be familiar, meaningful and relevant to students' academic life or job-related situations. Being well-prepared before writing, students must be given enough room

for creativity. Moreover, teacher must encourage collaborative group writing as well as individual writing, providing constructive and positive feedback.

Literature:

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