



Methods and language techniques that help students' writing

Natasha Kazmaj

(Albanian language Teacher), New York High School, Linze, Dajt, Tirana, Albania

Abstract

The aim of the school curriculum is to equip students with a range of language competencies, and in particular to train good writers. For an effective writing that fully meets the goals not only of the school curriculum, but also of the language training that students need throughout life, it is very important to follow the writing strategies step by step. Following the step-by-step strategies with a range of techniques that help at different stages of this process, makes writing easier and more effective.

Combining contemporary methods with traditional ones, during the learning process in general and that of writing in particular, helps in a good writing both in terms of content and formal and orthographic. Likewise a range of techniques used when reading and fulfilling other language competencies can be effective at different stages of the writing process. Exactly on some traditional learning techniques in combination with contemporary ones, and some language exercises that improve students' writing about vocabulary and coherence, are the subject of this article.

Keywords: language, techniques, competencies, curriculum

Introduction

The ability to communicate in writing is not a skill that can be acquired naturally, but is constantly taught and mastered through practice. Itself it is a complex process, which requires the successful combination of different linguistic components in order to convey the right message. The problems in students' writing are in ideas, structure and style as well as in spelling. Since spelling shortcomings have been addressed before and are constantly touched on in various analysis, we will focus mainly on strategies, techniques and methods related to idea generation, text structure in general and paragraph structure in particular. We will look at techniques that help enrich students' vocabulary and some curriculum elements that help their writing process.

1. Writing strategies

The stages through which the writing process goes simply are; forecasting (planning), writing the first draft, reviewing, editing and publishing ^[1].

1. *Prediction* is the stage during which the student clarifies on what he will write, and referring to the communication scheme, the message that he will convey after being acquainted with the referent. During this phase at the same time the student clarifies to the recipient the context in which it will be written, so that gradually until the last stage which belongs to the final submission of the paper, in other words the publication, he realizes an effective writing.
2. *Writing the first draft*. At this stage all ideas are thrown in writing, where each idea is elaborated in a paragraph, and at the end of this stage it is a free writing with all the ideas they have about the topic ^[2].
3. *Review*. In this phase, some students simply do a

mechanical process, that of editing, but this is a phase of the process that has nothing to do with the linguistic and grammatical side of the text but with the rearrangement of ideas. In a good part of the writing during this phase it is best to "put the writing to sleep" if possible and review it as an external reader to rearrange the ideas or give it to another writer to read, aloud, so that the author of the article may understand from the position of the audience how the ideas he has given sound.

4. *Editing*. At this stage the paper is prepared to be published, fulfilling not only the side of the idea it has realized in the previous stages, but completing this process by systematizing the text in terms of coherence (linguistic cohesion).
5. *Publication*. At this stage, the final copy is submitted, which concludes the process of making a writing. Publication can range from the simplest form, submission to the teacher, to publication in a newspaper or magazine ^[3].

2. Writing patterns that help students write accurately and effectively.

During our daily work as teachers, we notice that many students have difficulty expressing themselves in writing in various aspects of this process. They fail to summarize and express their thoughts, raise questions about the text, describe, analyze, inform, explain, compare or report something in writing and even keep personal notes to acquire a text.

In contemporary teaching, the method of composition has been overcome ^[4] (*creative work done by students as a written task to express beautifully and correctly their thoughts on a certain topic literary drafting*). *Creative*

drafting (descriptive, retelling) [5] to be replaced by written tasks.⁶ This process, which continues to be acquired throughout life, is related to different types of independent written tasks, ranging from the usual homework, to those of a research nature such as lectures and projects. Albanian language includes in the types of writings to be acquired and evaluated as precursors and aids in the written language formation of students, dictations, drafts, written tasks and essays, some of which need to be used nowadays in every lesson with the students who have writing difficulties.

Dictation and copying, is a form of differentiated work with students who face writing difficulties, and that applies not only to the first steps of the learning process, but can continue to be effective until the end of secondary education. This is because dictation, first of all, is an opportunity to strengthen spelling and punctuation skills. It can and should take place at different times of the school year in the form of mini-dictations, 5-10 minute "test" work, for the implementation of spelling rules by students. *Dictations are important forms of work to exercise students on various spelling issues, but also to verify, diagnose, check, evaluate, and ease future tasks* [7].

Prof. dr. Njazi Kazazi in his "Didactics of the Albanian language" presents some possible forms of dictation to facilitate the work of the teacher.

- a. **Warned dictation:** One of the forms of dictation is when students are introduced to the text that will be written during the dictation class, so that they can read it in advance. Another form of a warned dictation is the repetition and reinforcement of orthographic rules by students together with the teacher, before the development of dictation, during which students will write a text requiring the practical application of the orthographic rules treated.⁸
- b. **Dictation by choice:** It is the most difficult form of dictation and therefore it should be used and applied after students have acquired sufficient grammatical and spelling knowledge. Dictation by choice allows long texts to be taken, where there are many examples and instances of the use of a certain rule. Students should write in notebooks the main sets of words where the cases to be practiced belong (eg gender change in the plural, etc.).
- c. **Creative dictation:** The teacher presents to the students a text, which is read together. Spelling and punctuation problems that apply to the given text are discussed. To save time, students are asked to rewrite the text by changing the underlined structures of phrases and sentences. Spelling and punctuation problems are then discussed, where students tend to mistakes as a result of writing creatively. One form of this dictation could be: After students have read the given text 2-3 times and after the language problems that are intended to be checked are pointed out, the text is removed and students are allowed to write it according to memory. This can be an effective technique in the modeling writing practices mentioned above and in the stage of explaining writing strategies, namely editing a text.
- d. **Self-dictation:** Has a fairly dense use. Students write a

part of what they have memorized. This type of dictation makes a good connection between spelling and orthography and controls student's orthographic skills and habits well. Unlike other cases where the teacher pronounces the words and sentences himself, so the student has a certain orientation, now he himself is in the position of the person who dictates and must choose the alternatives he has. Selected parts for self-dictation should be written in the standard language.⁹

- e. **Dictation control:** (grades 1-7). This dictation can be used for the purpose of grading students. For this reason, the text should meet several standards: it must include as many spelling and punctuation cases as possible, because it will serve to diagnose the objectives that students have achieved. Within this dictation, in addition to the texts that are dictated, there may be additional exercises related to the acquisition and control of spelling rules that we want to evaluate and determine how they are acquired.

Copy is an easy form of work for students to practice spelling. Through it, based on a given text, students' attention to certain spelling problems and their care to write correctly is exercised to a good degree. Considering the goals of their development and the methodological ways that are followed, there are several types:

- a. *The complete copying of a text is done* in order for the student to focus his attention on the whole text he is copying, so that in addition to being figurative, he also focuses his attention on the spelling problems he has there. For example, add determinants to bold names, etc.
- b. *Selected copying* is a form of reinforcement exercise, where the importance of determining the demand and a clear instruction of the work they will perform is of paramount importance. Upon request, students do not copy the entire text, but only the orthograms and word clusters where the required facts are found. This type of writing is one of the most difficult forms of work, because the student must have sufficient preparation to be able to analyze and meet the requirements set by the teacher.¹⁰
- c. *Copying a text* that has some words in representative form (which are usually in parentheses) is a very common and widely used form and combines not only phonetic problems but also morphological and syntactic problems. It can serve as practical work in exercises related to the linguistic cohesion of text.
- d. *Copy a text by completing a few words and sentences. etc. (see: Kazazi: 253).*

3. Techniques that develop critical thinking and creative writing.

In order for the work about the training of students to be successful, the teacher must be well acquainted with the specifics of writing of different types, but also the level of the class so that the degree of difficulty increases gradually. If the forms of written tasks do not match the level of language preparation of the class, we cannot hope for success in developing the skills of written expressions. The first thing the teacher should do when entering the

classroom is to know the level of language knowledge of the students, so as not to mechanically apply what the program provides, or what other colleagues do with other classes where the level is different.

Decisions about the procedures and methods he uses should be tailored to the students, their training and their experiences. The class is characterized by activity, not passivity; by cooperation, not competition; and many opportunities to learn, in addition to textbooks and teacher-led situations ^[11].

Writing is a way to develop thinking, just like speaking and reading. This process cannot function and develop isolated from other skills such as speaking, listening and reading. As students write, they select ideas that are meaningful to them and record them in memory for later use, in a variety of situations.

1. *Graphic analogy organizer* is a method which focuses on the analysis of contrast comparison texts ^[12], which can very well be an efficient technique in planning such an essay. This is especially the case when students are asked to give their resemblance to a character from a book, movie or a well-known figure in art, science or sports, whom they would like to resemble.
2. *“Sketching a Story”* Technique It is a creative technique for scenario planning strategy based on Brainstorming ^[13]. This technique has 4 stages: planning, ideas, organization and communication. Each stage includes a creative session (about 45 minutes) and a critical session in which participants critique the outline of their story. Therefore, writings of this kind cannot be accomplished in less than three teaching classes.
 - The planning phase begins with problem definition, targeting the topic, 10 -12 columns, topics (column titles), are set to give ideas and then the issues are listed under headings, the target title is listed first.
 - The ideas phase, the ideas table, means taking a column from the planned table, which becomes the main topic and the issues of that column become the titles of new ideas.
 - The organization phase, the organized table, the participants identify who is responsible for the implementation of the selected solutions, what will happen and where.
 - In the communication phase - communication board, participants identify who should communicate for the whole event identified in the organization board to take place. Through the process, visual graphs summarize or present the corresponding points ^[14].

4. Pyramid diagram

A pyramid diagram is a method that guides students in selecting appropriate information from a reading section to be analyzed and to consider its many possible implications thereafter. (Musai 2005: 53). This method involves students in both reading and writing activities. The implementation of the method goes through these stages.

By asking a question to the students we guide them to select the right information from a reading piece. For example, "Albania of the 30s"

Students are given white sheets in the form of sheets and are asked to read the given material to put in each sheet the information related to the question asked. The selected information is categorized by requesting information from the student sheets.

Students are asked to group the sheets which have a common information. They categorize the titles in each group of sheets which we place in the pyramid above each respective category.

Construct two rectangles representing the two steps of the top of the pyramid. We ask students to find a title that corresponds to all the information gained during the lesson. Then, using the title based on the information gathered, we ask students to formulate a sentence which summarizes all the information that has been used and the categorizations made. Example;

Table 1

The 30s in Albania							
The period of the 30s in Albania marks a historical change in education, culture, literature and journalism.							
Historical conditions	Education	Poetry	Narration	Drama	Long prose	Publicity	Culture

The advantages of this method. Students construct a visual representation of how important details are used in drawing conclusions and making observations. Students are oriented towards their reading so they actively seek relevant information from the selected part. Students practice in keeping and extracting the most important notes according to several categories and improve in writing textbook summaries by organizing them well ^[15].

But this technique makes it possible for students to use it as an outline of ideas to write an evaluative essay about a writer, phenomenon, work or historical period and a good technique in project planning. As a result, it helps students to write effectively in any subject, and especially in topics that require cross-curricular interactions and curricular and extracurricular activities.

5. *Table of Semantic Features* ^[16] A technique that can be used in different subjects and makes possible a conscious reading but also helps to sketch various descriptive, argumentative, narrative texts, etc. This technique is effective in describing and analyzing characters. Thus the model offered helps to distinguish different features in the complexity of a character and helps to construct a descriptive text or evaluative writings about them.

It serves to plan the ideas in the first step of writing, in the description of a person realized in the most complete, objective and subjective way.

For example; Description of brother / sister /, friend / friend, etc.) Even in narrative texts; chronicles, roadmaps, reports, etc., this table can be used for planning and sketching the first draft of a descriptive, evaluative or comparative article.

Example; Folklore.

Table 2

	It's a prose	It's a poem	Has a standard beginning and ending	It's based in a true story	The origin of a place	Explains natural phenomena	Has a happy ending	Has literary figures
Legends	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	+
Tale	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	+
Myths	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+
Ballades	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+

6. *Notes (structured)* is a method that provides a systematic way to help students organize information for their reading, writing, and study. This method is a fluent form of sketching. The main ideas or categories are given an indicator (1) in the ranking. Attributes, details, or examples are given indicators 2, 3, or 4. This method involves the following steps: We start by modelling the notes on the notes using categories which are familiar to the students. We show how the indicators relate to each other.

- a. Indicator 1 is the main idea: literary genre.
- b. Indicator 2 are examples of processing indicator (category) 1: prose, poetry, drama.
- c. Indicators 3 are examples of processing indicator 2 (prose): categories such as: story, novella, romani.
- d. For indicators 4 students can list characteristics such as: types of novel by topic: historical, social, psychological, realistic or narrative style, psychic stream naturalist, naturalist, expressionist ^[17], etc. Notes on notes give students a way to analyze their writing according to the structure and development of ideas.

7. *Forecasting terms in advance.* This method puts the student in the role of a discoverer, giving him the main concepts or terms of the lesson that will be realized within the class. Usually the number of terms varies from 4 to 6, depending on the age and knowledge of the students. The teacher generally gives the students information about the lesson to be done. Introducing them to some of the key learning terms requires them individually to choose what those words represent. Through these words they must create a story, or narrative. After a period of thought students individually are asked to share the thought or ideas with their bank mates, working for a few minutes to guess what the terms represent to build the story. The information is read and students are asked what they themselves have predicted before. This method encourages students to give original thoughts and develop imagination. It is a simple technique because students, despite the limitations of vocabulary and subject matter, manage to express in writing different personal or group experiences ^[18].

8. *Directed imagination* ^[19]. During this technique students are given a ready-made "dream", an idea, a detailed idea where the student can develop in writing or orally his imagination. For example; what will you do if?) It can serve as a preparatory stage of free, short writing in a short time frame that does not require spelling perfection and ordering of thoughts, but a free habit of the student's imagination and personal experiences. In the preparatory stages of the essay they

can serve as the first draft or planning of the writing that generates further during the other stages of writing.

9. How to improve students' vocabulary.

One problem we have encountered and continue to discuss is the poverty of students' vocabulary and their problems with the use of synonymy, the expressions that make the language of writing more diverse, the words of the mother language instead of the foreign word. etc.

One of the reasons dedicated to this problem is the reading of some artistic literature and rich writings by the lexicon, but also a kind of superficial reading of writings that offer lexical richness and very good linguistic forms. Orienting the student to the book in the age of technology is difficult, but techniques and technology itself can be used to alleviate this problem.

Mimoza Gjokutaj in "Didactics of the Albanian language", points out three main directions of enriching the lexicon of students, in which emphasis should be placed during learning the mother language and beyond.

- Familiarize students with the semantics of the word.
- Language development of children depending on different styles during communication.
- Gradual distinction and separation of simple discourse words from dialectal ones, with standard language words to enhance the culture of expression.

Some of the activities that can be developed with students to work in these areas are; discussion of texts that have a certain theme to acquire specific vocabulary in different fields; vocabulary exercises that have the semantics of the word, synonymy, antonymy, ambiguity, homonymy, phraseology, lexical field, word family, word formation, neologisms, archaisms, dialectalisms, regionalisms, internationalisms, according to their laws and historiography.

Vocabulary work in every lesson should have its place and should start by understanding the word, by relating it to the reality it marks, to the new meanings it acquires in a given context or ambiguity in a situation, and that is determined by everyone's perception of it. A special work related to the lexicon is needed to make possible not only the understanding of the text but also to make a part of the students' lexicon a part of them ^[20].

The Dominican University of California on the School of Liberal Arts & Education page on "Vocabulary Treasures" presents five ways to improve student vocabulary;

- Working a few minutes every day with the vocabulary to improve it not only by finding words and their primary meaning, but all its possible meanings.
- Meaningful reading of texts, so a critical reading not only by identifying new words in the text used, but also their use in the reflection phase, creatively.
- Learning in the context of the word is often insufficient and ineffective to generate and remember new words.

Thus students may be asked to bring words into contexts they encounter in everyday reality such as; boys for sports, the most popular figures in the preferred sport giving adjectives and names that characterize them.

- Learn the specific vocabulary of a writing. Some texts not only have specific vocabulary and need vocabulary to explain them, but are also difficult to recall.
- That way we ask students to identify the key words of a text, especially when the text has new and specific words, and after reading the text carefully to explain, retell, summarize it through these words.

Writing notes in order to process and store a selected vocabulary in students' brains requires an automatic system of automatic memory. This system, also called non-moving procedural memory, stores repetitive information, such as multiplication tables, lyrics, words, and definitions ^[21].

10. Techniques to improve coherence and cohesion in writing.

When learning the mother language in general and grammar in particular, it is necessary that the latter be related to use in discourse, in various communication situations and not as a mechanical part detached from the context and situation in which it is used.

So what needs to be done by teachers is to put grammar in function of the discourse in general and the linguistic cohesion of the text in particular. Based on those points that prof. Rami Memushaj points out in "Standard Albanian", the exercise work with students to improve language cohesion with students should be focused on;

1. **Grammatical adaptation of limbs**; noun with adjective, subject with predicate, coordinating conjunction with determiner, pronoun with nucleus, etc.
2. **Conjunctions**. One of the most important linguistic elements of cohesion, are connectors in general and connectors in particular. At this point one must distinguish when the conjunction is a linguistic tool within the sentence, the period, and when it serves to connect the sentences in a paragraph. When the conjunction connects sentences between them, depending on what we convey and emphasize through the comma, the shift simultaneously creates logical connections between the sentences in the paragraph. In the case of conjunctions between sentences, its meaning goes beyond the first meaning, realizing precisely the logical flow in the text.

Example; *the foreigners headed for the shore and we followed them with our eyes. And, the two sides were far apart.*

These types of conjunctions enable the semantic connection between the sentences in the paragraph and provide a logical line in the paragraph, so it is important that students practice and use these conjunctions depending on what they are announcing about the transition from one phrase to another. Depending on the function that the connectors perform in this position, they are classified into;

- Reference before or after; as it was said, as it was seen, according to the notice... etc.
- Generalization; in general, that is, generally... etc.

- Cause-and-effect relationships; in this way, consequently, therefore, etc.
- Time or local reports; whereas, now, before, at this point, in connection with this... etc.
- Comparison; on the contrary, so that, except... etc.
- Objection or permission; however, on the contrary, as long as... etc.
- Addition and intensification; even, firstly, secondly, in the first place..., in addition... etc.
- Introduction and illustration; thus, for example... etc.

Other tools that achieve cohesion in the text are

1. Repetition of the keyword; (retrieval) that enables the preservation of central thought in the text.
2. Synonyms, a way of repetition but that avoids the monotony of the text.
3. Reference (substitution) again to avoid monotonous repetition and which is realized through pronouns or groups of words that sometimes expand and sometimes have the same meaning according to the context.
4. Avoiding words of another type of style and discourse in a text that is categorized into a particular discourse.
5. Use compound sentences rather than simple if the text is not fiction.
6. In the order of the limbs in the sentence first comes the familiar concept.
7. Instead of coordination, use the subordination realized not only with parts of sentences but also with second limbs; such as separation, circumstances, etc.

All of the above concepts should become the object of teachers' work from the very beginning of the student writing process, to become a natural habit in everyday writing.²²

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