23 Focus on writing skills

A Warm-up

Look at the following comments made by practising teachers. Which views do you agree with? Discuss your ideas in small groups.

Tracy:

I sometimes think that writing in class is a bit of a waste of time. The learners can do it at home and we have so many other things to fit into lessons anyway.

Korali:

I use writing in class to give learners the chance to produce grammatically accurate sentences.

Chris:

I like to teach writing by showing the students an example of the sort of text they should write. We talk about the structure of the text, and then they write a similar text.

Laura:

I make sure my learners know how to use spell checks and grammar checking software, as well as where they can find online dictionaries. I am in two minds about how much I should encourage the use of machine translation – I think it is inevitable that people will use it.

David:

I don't think you should correct every mistake when learners write something. I only pick out what I think are the main points, and I always write comments saying what I liked about what was said, or what I thought was surprising, and so on.

Quyen:

I like to get my students to comment on each other's written work, because I think they can learn a lot from that.

B Writing activities

1 Look at the activities below and complete the table.

a Multiple choice gap-fill
The learners choose the best way to complete sentences. For example:
We had a nice holiday, _____ the weather was bad.

a) despite	b) despite of	c) because	d) although

b Reproducing a model
Learners study a model text and then write their own text of a similar nature. For example, they read an email of complaint and answer questions about the layout of the email and the content of each paragraph; afterwards they write their own email of complaint.

c Interactive writing
Learners interact in writing. For example, they write text messages to each other and respond.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009091602.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

d Writing an essay
Learners write an essay. For example, they discuss the achievements of a famous person.
e Dialogue writing + items
Learners write a dialogue that includes preselected language items. For example, they must include five words that are given by the teacher.

Analysis of activity types					
Activity type	**Is there a communicative purpose?**	**Do the learners produce texts?**	**Is the activity similar to what learners might do outside the language classroom?**	**Does the writer know who the reader will be?**	**What level could it be used for?**
a Multiple choice gap-fill					
b Reproducing a model					
c Interactive writing					
d Writing an essay					
e Dialogue writing + items					

2 Work in small groups. Look at the following writing task and answer the questions.

> Write six sentences describing your favourite film.

a How could you make this exercise more communicative?
b How could you redesign it so that learners produced a single, unified text, rather than a list of sentences?
c How could you make it more authentic?
d How could you provide a readership?

C Stages in writing

1 Imagine writing a blog post about a particular teaching context with which you are familiar. Put the stages below in the order in which you would do them. Are there any things here that you wouldn't do?

a Write a final copy.
b Read and make changes and corrections.
c Write a rough draft.
d Organize ideas.
e Consult books and/or talk to colleagues to get ideas.

2 We can see from C1 above, that writing involves a number of different processes. In small groups, discuss the implications this has for teaching.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009091602.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

D Providing feedback on written work

Work in pairs. Discuss the three ways in which the errors in this learner writing have been indicated and answer the questions.

1 Which of the three ways do you think is most effective?
2 The writer of the text was at intermediate level (B1). Do you think the approach to correction would be the same for all levels?
3 What do the symbols mean? Complete the key.

> Response to student writing, or 'feedback', is one of the most important – and time-consuming – activities undertaken by any writing instructor.
>
> Dana Ferris, 2018

As you know, this product is on sale for four years and we want increase sale. We have some ideas for advertise the product. Healthy products are fashinable now and we should to focus on this.

Our product is ~~make~~ made from herbs and we can ~~to~~ tell people this. One of the idea s is to ~~changed~~ changed the name because now it is difficult to ~~pronunciate~~ pronounce. Also we ~~belief~~ believe that we need to update the ~~wraps~~ wrapper.

Also, we are deciding (T) the price should (G) cheaper than (+) competitors because (sp) we can do (ww) more market share this way. In addition (P) we should to (un) be an official sponsor at the next Olympic Games. But television publicity (ww) is also very important.

ww = wrong word	wo =	T =	un =
sp = spelling	G =	P =	+ =

E Analysing material

Look at the material aimed at A2 level learners. It is taken from a section in the coursebook called 'Skills for Writing'. In the previous section, the learners listened to a recording of a student discussing which homestay family he should choose when he goes to study in Australia.

Answer the questions.

1 What is the overall purpose of 2a and 2b?
2 What is the overall purpose of 3a, b and c?
3 What is the overall purpose of 4a, b and c?
4 What is the purpose of exercise 4d?
5 What is the purpose of exercise 4e?
6 Could you use this material with the learners you are currently teaching? Would you want to adapt it in any way?
7 How could you make the task at 4d more challenging for stronger learners?
8 How could you make the task at 4d less challenging for weaker learners?

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009091602.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

2 READING

a Ahmed decided to stay with the Conways. Read his email to them. Tick (✓) the main reason he writes to them.

1 ☐ to ask about their house
2 ☐ to tell them about all the sports he likes
3 ☐ to tell them about himself
4 ☐ to explain how much he wants to study

b Read the email again. Number the information in the order you find it.

☐ his future plans ☐ his hobbies
☐ his family's jobs ☐ his hometown

Dubai

Dear Mr and Mrs Conway

My name is Ahmed Al Mansouri and I come from Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Thank you for offering to be my homestay family when I'm in Sydney.

I am 23 years old and study biology at university. I live with my family in Dubai. My father is a businessman and my mother is a doctor. I've got one brother and one sister. They're university students too.

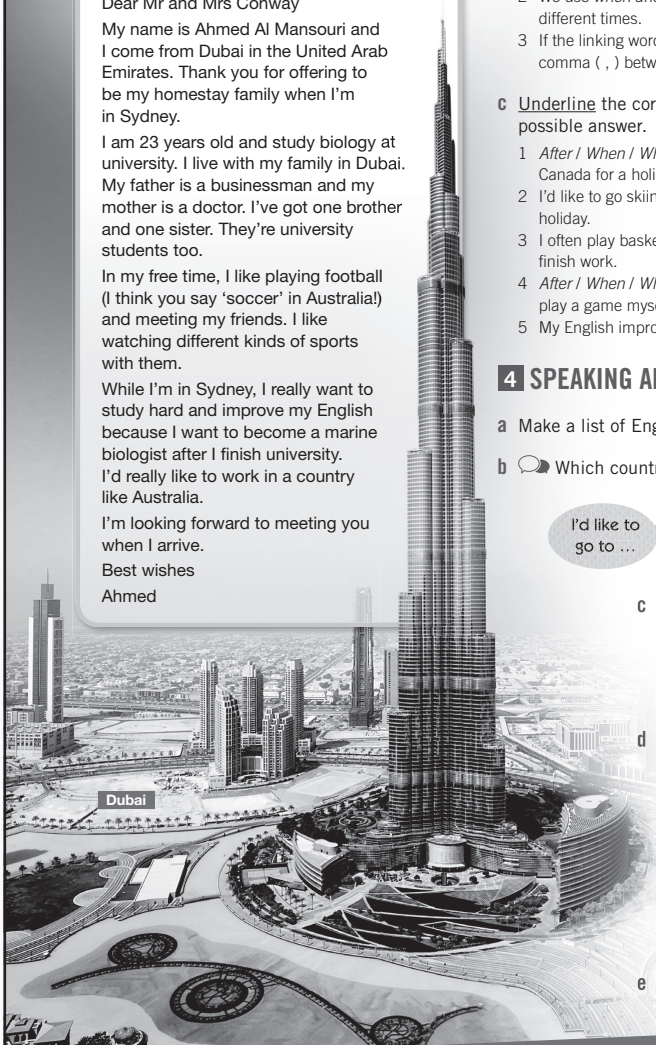
In my free time, I like playing football (I think you say 'soccer' in Australia!) and meeting my friends. I like watching different kinds of sports with them.

While I'm in Sydney, I really want to study hard and improve my English because I want to become a marine biologist after I finish university. I'd really like to work in a country like Australia.

I'm looking forward to meeting you when I arrive.

Best wishes

Ahmed



3 WRITING SKILLS

Linking ideas with *after*, *when* and *while*

a Underline the word in each sentence that's different from Ahmed's email.

1 Thank you for offering to be my homestay family while I'm in Sydney.
2 I want to become a marine biologist when I finish university.
3 I'm looking forward to meeting you after I arrive.
4 When I'm in Sydney, I really want to study hard.

b Look at the sentences in 3a and complete the rules with the words in the box.

after beginning while

1 We use *when* and _____ to join two activities that happen at the same time.
2 We use *when* and _____ to join two activities that happen at different times.
3 If the linking word is at the _____ of the sentence, we use a comma (,) between the two parts.

c Underline the correct words. There is more than one possible answer.

1 *After* / *When* / *While* I finish my English course, I'd like to go to Canada for a holiday.
2 I'd like to go skiing in the mountains *after* / *when* / *while* I'm on holiday.
3 I often play basketball with my colleagues *after* / *when* / *while* I finish work.
4 *After* / *When* / *While* I watch a game of football, I usually want to play a game myself.
5 My English improved *after* / *when* / *while* I was in Sydney.

4 SPEAKING AND WRITING

a Make a list of English-speaking countries you know.

b Which country in 4a would you like to visit? Why?

I'd like to go to …
I like warm places.
They say the people are friendly.

c Plan an email about yourself to a homestay family in that country. Make notes about:

- your age
- study / job
- what you'd like to do in that country
- free-time interests
- family

d Write your email. Tick (✓) each box.

☐ Start the letter with *Dear*
☐ Say thank you
☐ Say who you are
☐ Talk about study / work / free time
☐ Talk about your family
☐ Say what you want to do in the country
☐ Include *I'm looking forward …*
☐ Finish the letter with *Best wishes*
☐ Use *after, when* and *while* to link your ideas

e Swap emails with another student and check the ideas in 4d.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009091602.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

KEY WORDS FOR TEACHERS

Check you know the meanings of these terms.

- *process*
- *readership*
- *purpose*
- *corrective feedback*
- *authentic task*

REFLECTION

Complete the following sentence in as many different ways as you can. Try to use one of the words in the box below in each sentence you write.

collaborative	communicate	grammar	model texts	process writing	readership

To teach writing ...

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Reference

Ferris, D. (2018). Writing instruction and Assessment. In J. Newton, D. Ferris, C. Goh, W, Grabe, F, Stoller and L. Vandergrift (eds.), *Teaching English to Second Language Learners in Academic Contexts*. New York: Routledge.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009091602.024 Published online by Cambridge University Press