

Faculty of Education, Charles University
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**WRITING ACTIVITIES IN EFL CLASSES FOR ADULTS AND
YOUNG ADULTS:
HOW THESE ACTIVITIES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO
LANGUAGE IMPROVEMENT FROM ELEMENTARY TO
INTERMEDIATE LEVELS**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Mr. Mark Farrell, who has provided me with during the development of this thesis. I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and encouragement. I also thank the faculty of the Faculty of Education, Charles University, Prague.

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PROHLÁŠENÍ

Prohláším, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně a uváděná
zdroje jsou správně citovány.

Mark Farrell

ABSTRACT

This diploma thesis deals with the issue of writing activities in EFL classes for
adults and young adults and how these activities can contribute to language
improvement at the elementary to intermediate levels. However, it has often been
neglected and the remaining skills have been performed. This thesis examines the
methodology underlying the teaching of writing. Identifies different approaches to
teaching writing, presents the main typology of writing tasks and looks into the
role of teachers and giving feedback on written work. The practical section
presents a list of twenty independent activities that can be used as a lesson to
practice a targeted topic or language structure.

ABSTRAKT

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá problematikou psaní v učebnách
anglického jazyka pro dospělé a mládež dospělé a jak mohou tyto aktivity přispět
ke zlepšení jazykových znalostí na základních, středních a pokročilých úrovních.
Diplomová práce se věnuje základní metodice psaní, typologii
psaního projevu, identifikaci základní typologie psaního projevů, analýze
typologie úloh a jejich provádění a také roli učitele při psaní a
hodnocení psaního projevu. Praktická část diplomové práce se zabývá
psaními aktivitami, které lze použít jako samostatnou lekci k procvičení
cílové tématiky nebo jazykové struktury.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla veškerou prostudovanou literaturu.



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This diploma thesis deals with the issue of writing activities in EFL classes for adults and young adults and how these activities can contribute to language improvement at the elementary to intermediate levels. However, it has often been relegated and the remaining skills have been preferred. This thesis examines the methodology underlying the teaching of writing, identifies different approaches to teaching writing, presents the main typology of writing tasks and looks into the role of teachers and giving feedback on written work. The practical section presents a list of twenty independent activities that can be used in a lesson to practise a targeted topic or language structure.

ABSTRAKT:

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá problematikou psaného projevu ve výuce anglického jazyka pro dospělé a mladé dospělé a jak mohou tyto aktivity přispět ke zlepšení jazykových znalostí na začátečnických, mírně pokročilých a pokročilých úrovních. Diplomová práce se věnuje základní metodice pro výuku psaného projevu, identifikuje základní přístupy k výuce této dovednosti, uvádí typologii aktivit na jejich procvičování a také zkoumá otázku role učitele a hodnocení psaného projevu. Praktická část diplomové práce se skládá z dvaceti na sobě nezávislých konkrétních aktivit vhodných k procvičování cílového tématu či jazykové struktury.

KEY WORDS:

Skills, writing, writing activities, EFL classrooms, product and process approach, genre analysis, the roles of teachers, evaluation and feedback

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Acknowledgement

Abstract and key words

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1 Introduction

I have been teaching English for four years. After those years of experience and hours of talking to my fellow-students and fellow-teachers, I have come to the realization that what we all find difficult to teach and help students improve is their writing. That is probably the reason why teaching writing has often been neglected in classes for students of English as a Foreign Language, besides classes preparing students for Cambridge or other exams where writing is one of the compulsory parts of the exam. I have also heard writing called the 'Cinderella of language skills'.

I also remember my years of being a student of not only English but also other foreign languages. We hardly ever paid attention to practising any writing in a systematic way. Suddenly, I found myself studying English at Charles University having to write essays on various topics in different subjects.

When the time of choosing a topic for my diploma thesis came, I realized that teaching writing skills is what I would like to know more about and definitely improve in my own teaching. I would also like, hopefully, to help other teachers wishing to better incorporate writing into their syllabi.

There are two aims of this diploma thesis: firstly, I will analyse the role of writing in classes of English as a Foreign Language (further: "EFL classes") for adults and young adults at the elementary to the intermediate level. I will examine the theory underlying the methodology of teaching writing, different approaches to teaching this skill, typologies of writing activities, roles of teachers and evaluating the written work.

Secondly, I aim to compile a list of twenty writing activities that can easily be used in general English classes and that would add to students' language improvement. I will try ten of these activities in my own classes so that I can experience if they work and later comment on them. By collecting and presenting these activities, I hope to contribute to the promotion of writing in the classroom.

In order to pursue the aims of this thesis I am going to read works by well-known methodologists and specialists in the field of writing in EFL classes, such as Ronald White, Donn Byrne, Jeremy Harmer, Penny Ur, Tricia Hedge and Jim Scrivener. In addition, I will utilise the Internet for relevant articles and activities.

The target groups I will aim my activities at are young adults and adults from the elementary to intermediate levels. I have chosen these target groups firstly, simply, because they are those that I myself teach and therefore available to try the activities out. Secondly, from my personal experience I know that elementary to intermediate students form the majority of EFL classes in the Czech Republic. I will not deal with a specialized form of writing, such as academic writing, business correspondence and writing in classes preparing students for international examinations (Cambridge exams, TOEFL, etc.).

Given its two aims, this diploma thesis will consist of two main sections: a theoretical part and a practical part. In the theoretical part, I am going to start by identifying the four language skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. Next, I will narrow the focus on writing as a skill and explore different views and approaches to writing. In the subsequent chapter, I will analyse writing activities in EFL classes and present the main typologies of these activities. I will also think about the role of teachers and giving feedback on students' writing.

In the practical part, I am going to prepare a list of twenty writing activities based on the classification I will present in the theoretical part. In each activity, the writing focus, the level of students, the preparation and the materials will be specified. The ten activities will be concluded by an evaluation of the activity tried out in a class. The comments will be supported by presentation of students' work in appendices. Most likely, the activities I am going to collect are specifically designed for the individual levels of elementary to intermediate students and there is no or minimal possibility of using them at levels other than these.

This diploma thesis will be completed by a conclusion in which I will summarize and present the outcomes of the tested activities.

2 Theoretical part

2.1. Skills in language learning

In any language teaching we teach four basic skills. These skills are classified as receptive and productive skills. The receptive skills are reading and listening; the productive skills are speaking and writing.

Harmer (2001:199) points out that receptive skills are the ways in which people extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear. He goes on to discuss that understanding a piece of discourse involves more than just knowing the language. To make sense of any text we need to have pre-existent knowledge of the world (Cook 1989 in Harmer 2001:199). This knowledge is often referred to as schema. There are mental representations in our heads of typical situations that we come across. When we are stimulated by particular words, discourse patterns, or contexts, such schematic knowledge is activated and we are able to recognize what we see or hear because it fits into patterns we already know.

Shared schemata make spoken and written communication efficient. Without the right kind of pre-existing knowledge, comprehension becomes much more difficult. That causes problems for foreign learners who have different shared knowledge of cultural reference and discourse patterning in their own language and thus have to work hard to understand what they see or hear.

Productive skills vary in many ways. In order to be understood, every communication should have a structure. According to Harmer (2001:246), in speech this involves following conversational patterns, the use of lexical phrases or the pre-fixed or semi-fixed word strings. There are less similar phrases to be found in writing, and that is why writing has to be coherent and cohesive. A text is coherent if a reader can follow the sequence of ideas and points easily. Cohesion is concerned with the technical side of writing. A writer concentrates on the various linguistic ways of connecting ideas across phrases and sentences. In Harmer's view, when people with similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds speak to each other or write to each other they obey certain conventions. These rules or conventions are neither written down anywhere, nor easy to define. This is where the shared schemata come to be used.

The author specifies three rules to be considered (Harmer 2001:247):

- Sociocultural rules: speakers from similar cultural backgrounds know the ways to speak to each other in terms of formality, appropriate language and paralinguistic features.
These rules change over time, but at any given moment they exist in the public consciousness so that obeying them or flouting them become acts of belonging or rejection.
- Turn-taking: this is the way in which participants in conversations get their chance to speak. They recognize this moment by verbal or visual signals or by signalling they want their turn.
- Rules for writing: there are rules which we need to recognise and either follow or purposefully flout. These might include patterns of letters, conventions followed in journalism or fiction, or punctuation rules.

Next, Harmer states that the teaching of productive skills is closely connected with receptive skill work. Productive skill work is a way of helping students with their receptive skills, e.g.: students can apply their knowledge from writing activities to their reading. Conversely, production can only continue in combination with the practice of receptive skills. Teachers should not have students practise language skills in isolation. They should employ tasks where the practice of one skill leads on to the practice of another skill.

2.2. Writing as a skill

Halliday (1989:39) suggests that writing has evolved in societies as a result of cultural changes creating communicative needs which cannot be readily met by the spoken language. Over the early years, there developed a need for permanent records which could be referred to over and over again. This was the initial stimulus for the emergence of a new form of language: writing.

Scrivener (2005:192) points out that the role of writing in everyday life has changed over recent decades. In the early 1990s, many people wrote very little day by day. However, the popularity of email, web forums, Internet messenger services and text messaging has meant that there is now a huge increase in written communication. This new kind of communication has its own rules and rituals, and in some cases has developed its own shorthand, abbreviations and lexis, often

because there is a need to write quickly or within a limited word or character count

Authors (Scrivener, Ur, and Byrne) agree that many people actually do very little writing in day-to-day life apart from the new ways of communication. A great deal of what people write is quite short: brief notes to friends or colleagues, answers on questionnaires or forms, diary entries, postcards, etc. The need for longer, formal written work seems to have lessened over the years, and this is reflected in many classrooms where writing activities are less often found than those for other skills.

Halliday (1989:41) distinguishes the following range of functions in an everyday written language:

- primarily for action
public signs, e.g., on roads and stations; product labels and instructions, e.g. on food, tools or toys purchased; recipes; maps; television and radio guides; bills; menus; telephone directories; ballot papers; computer manuals; monitors and printouts.
For social contact: personal correspondence: letters, postcards, greeting cards.
- primarily for information
newspapers (news, editorials) and current affairs magazines; hobby magazines; non-fiction books, including textbooks; public notices; advertisements; political pamphlets; scholastic, medical, etc. reports; guidebooks and travel literature
- primarily for entertainment
light magazines, comic strips; fiction books; poetry and drama; newspaper features; film subtitles; games, including computer games.

Harmer (2001), Ur (2006) and Nunan (1998) draw attention to the differences between spoken and written discourse. However, Nunan (1998:84) stresses that some spoken texts will be more like written texts than others, while some written texts will be more like spoken texts than others.

Writing, in Nunan's view, is often decontextualised. Writers are usually distant in time and place from the person/people with whom they wish to communicate. They have to deduct reader's knowledge. Writers also need to predict possible difficulties, e.g., indirect contact with the readers makes it difficult to use readers' feedback and fine-tune their message to ease communication.

Ur (2006:161) also talks about **decontextualisation**. She claims that writing of a text is detached in time and space from its reading; the writer normally works alone, and is not usually acquainted with his or her readers. Speaking regularly takes place in immediate interaction with known listeners, with the availability of immediate feedback.

Among other differences, authors mention permanence, explicitness, density, organisation, language register, writing being a learnt skill, amount and importance, etc.

A text is, according to Ur (2006:159), permanent. It means that written discourse is fixed and stable so the reading can be done at whatever time, speed and level the readers wish. Spoken text in contrast is momentary, and moves quickly in real time. The listener must in general follow what is said at the speed of the speaker. Related to this is the fact that a written text has to be explicit; it has to make clear the context and all references. In speech, however, the real-time situation and knowledge shared between speaker and listener means that some information can be presupposed.

Further, Ur (2006:161) adds that context is presented much more densely in writing. In speech, the information is conveyed through many more words: there are a great many repetitions, glosses and fillers, producing a text that is noticeably longer and with more redundant passages.

When it comes to organisation, a written text is usually organised and carefully formulated. Its composer has time and opportunity to edit it before making it available for reading. A speaker is improvising as he or she speaks: ongoing alterations, in the shape of glosses, self-corrections, etc. produce an apparently disorganised "stream-of-consciousness" kind of discourse. A written text conforms more to conventional rules of grammar, and its vocabulary is more precise and formal.

Harmer (2001:255-257) also talks about writing having a number of conventions which separate it from speaking. Apart from the differences in grammar and

vocabulary, there are issues of letter, word, and text formation, manifested by handwriting, spelling and layout and punctuation:

Handwriting

There are many students whose native-language orthography is different from English and these students have difficulty forming English letters.

Spelling

Incorrect spelling does not prevent the understanding of a written message; it can affect the reader's judgement. Bad spelling is perceived as a lack of education or care. Moreover, not all varieties of English spell the same words in the same way (color x colour, theater x theatre). To make things clear, teachers should get their students to focus on a particular variety of English (British x American) as a spelling model for them to aspire to.

Layout and punctuation

Different writing communities (both between and within cultures) obey different punctuation and layout conventions in communications such as letters, reports, and publicity. These are frequently non-transferable from one community or language to another (quotation of direct speech, commas, full stops, capitalisation of names, months, the pronoun I). To be a successful writer in another language, there is a need to be aware of these layouts and use and modify them when appropriate to get the message across.

Other significant characteristics of written and spoken discourse in Ur's view are *slowness of production, speed of perception, sheer amount and importance* (Ur 2006:161):

Writing is much slower than speaking. However, we can usually read a piece of text and understand it much faster than we can take in the same text if we listen to someone read it aloud to us.

Spoken texts contain more words than representation of the same information in writing; this is caused by redundancy. In Ur's opinion most people speak far more than they write. Associated with this point is that "*speech is more important for survival and effective functioning in society than writing is*" (Ur 2006:161).

2.3. Approaches to writing

Most methodologists (Harmer, Scrivener, Thornbury, Tribble) distinguish among the following approaches to writing in EFL classes: product and process writing, genre analysis, and creative writing.

Product and process writing

The authors agree that in the process of writing we can focus either on the product of writing or on the writing process itself. When concentrating on the product we are interested in the aim and the end product whereas a process approach pays attention to the various stages that any piece of writing goes through. Harmer (2001:258) emphasises that the successful application of process writing gets to the bottom of the various skills that should be employed when writing. Process approaches focus more on the various classroom activities which are believed to promote the development of skilled language use.

According to Nunan (1998:86), product-oriented approaches favour classroom activities in which the learner is engaged in imitating, copying and transforming models of correct language. This occurs at the level of the sentence. There used to be a belief that before students can be expected to write coherent paragraphs, they should have mastered the language at the level of the sentence.

A process approach asks students to consider the procedure of putting together a good piece of work. Ron White and Valerie Arndt (1991:4) say that process writing is an interrelated set of recursive stages which include:

- generating (brainstorming, using questions, making notes, using visuals/role plays/simulations);
- focusing (making sure we are getting the message across we want to get across);
- structuring (ordering information, experimenting with arrangements);
- drafting (beginning, adding, ending);
- evaluating (assessing the draft, responding, conferencing);
- reviewing (checking context, connections, assessing impact, editing);

Process writing is time-consuming; however, the various stages encourage language study, an interaction between teacher and students and mainly between the students themselves. Attention to grammar and accuracy is minimised.

Tribble (1997:41) points out some possible problems of the process approach. One of the problems is finding the right balance between the teachers' feeling of what is important for their students as writers and the materials they often have to work with. He draws attention to the contradictory influence the classroom materials might have on the students' writing progress. Another problem Tribble indicates is whether the process approach is applicable in all settings where writing is taught.

Supposing the whole procedure is handled with care and the teacher has a professional attitude it can have a significant impact on language improvement.

Genre analysis

In a genre analysis approach, learners study model texts in the genre they are going to write before the writing itself. If teachers want their students to write a book review, they should let them look at some newspaper or magazine book reviews and only after this should the students start their own compositions. If the students' task is to write curriculum vitae, teachers should bring real examples of CVs to classes to analyse the structure and specific language use.

Harmer (2001:259) sees some pitfalls in the genre analysis approach. He claims that asking students to imitate a given style could be seen as prescriptive and encouraging them to see writing as a form of reproduction rather than as a creative act. However, it is important to mention that this is only the first stage – the pre-writing stage.

A genre approach is mainly used in classes for students of English for Specific Purposes. Nevertheless, it is also highly useful for general English courses.

Creative writing

Creative writing means imaginative tasks such as writing poetry, stories, or plays. Harmer argues (2001:259) that when an imaginative writing task is introduced; students often feel they have nothing to say. Students can find creative writing a painful and de-motivating experience, associated with a sense of frustration and failure in previous classes. In order to make sure that the students are motivated and encouraged, teachers should provide thorough guidance and a great deal of input activities or ways to stimulate students' minds or memories.

Writing as a cooperative activity

In some methodologists' point of views (Harmer: 260, Tribble: 57-61), cooperative writing works well with both process and genre-based approaches. In the first case, reviewing and evaluation are greatly enhanced by having more than one person working on it, and generation of ideas is frequently livelier with two or more people involved than it is when writers work on their own. According to them, writing in groups, whether as part of a long process or as part of a short game-like communicative activity, can be greatly motivating for students, including not only writing, but research, discussion, peer evaluation and group pride in a group accomplishment. Co-operative writing provides each writer with a reader.

Other approaches to teaching writing are examined by Donn Byrne (1991:21). He looks into teaching writing with a focus on accuracy, fluency, text and purpose:

The accuracy-oriented approaches stress the importance of control in order to eliminate mistakes from written work. Students combine various sentence types and manipulation exercises. Little by little the amount of control is reduced. At later stages, students can be given guidance with language and content, but they may be allowed opportunities for self-expression as well.

The fluency approach encourages students to write as much as possible and as quickly as possible without worrying about making mistakes. This attempt to writing is similar to the approach Scrivener (2005:198) calls "fast writing". He claims that for many writers, the most difficult thing is simply to start writing. This is where fast writing can help. Students need a few pieces of blank paper.

The rules are that when a teacher says "start", students should:

- start writing about the topic;
- not stop writing;
- not put their pen down at all;
- not worry about spelling, grammar, etc.;
- write "um, um, um" or "rubbish" or something else if they can't think of what to write;
- not stop to go back and read what they have written;
- keep writing till a teacher says "stop" (five/eight/ten minutes or however long the teacher thinks is appropriate for the group).

Much of what students will have written is waste. But there will often be ideas that can be built upon. The learners now should have enough time to look back over what they have written. They can use it as starting points for the new writing. The third approach that Byrne takes into consideration is focus on text (Byrne 1991:22). In this approach, the importance of a paragraph as the basic unit of written expression is stressed. The main concern lies in teaching students to construct and organise paragraphs. It teaches students to express themselves at a level beyond the sentence. Various techniques are used:

- forming paragraphs from jumbled sentences;
- writing parallel paragraphs;
- developing paragraphs from topic sentences.

Lastly, a focus on purpose is pondered. Byrne (1991:23) highlights that in real life, there is usually a reason for writing and a specific reader. These factors have often been, according to Byrne, neglected in teaching and practising writing.

Another methodologist to be considered is Penny Ur and her division of writing as a means or as an end (Ur 2006:162).

Writing as a means

Writing is regularly used within EFL courses as a suitable means for noting down new vocabulary; copying out grammar rules; writing out answers to reading or listening comprehension questions; doing written tests. In these examples, writing is used either as a means of getting the students to attend to and practise a particular language point, or as a convenient method of testing it.

Writing as an end

Other activities take as their main objective the writing itself. Ur specifies micro- and macro- levels at which students can practise writing. At the micro-level, they practise specific written forms at the level of word or sentence (handwriting or typing, spelling, punctuation); at the macro-level the weight is on content and organisation; learners express themselves using their own words, state a purpose for writing, and often specify an audience. Examples: narrating a story, writing a letter.

As both means and end

In the last approach, Ur combines purposeful and original writing with the learning or practice of some other skill or content. For example, a written response to the reading of a controversial newspaper article (combines writing with reading); the writing of anecdotes to illustrate the meaning of idioms (combines writing with vocabulary practice).

2.4. Writing in EFL classes

Before embarking on real writing in EFL classes, let us consider the reason for teaching writing. Donn Byrne (1991:6) speaks about several reasons. In the early stages of English language acquisition, writing serves these pedagogical purposes:

- Various forms of writing enable teachers to provide different learning styles and needs. Some students feel more at ease and secure, if they are allowed to read and write in the language rather than speak.
- Written work supplies some tangible evidence that students are making progress in the language.
- Properly integrated skills (reading with writing, writing with listening) appear to be more effective when students are exposed to a foreign language.
- Writing means variety in classroom activities. It can help maintain or introduce a more relaxed and quieter atmosphere, especially with younger students.
- Exposure to language through work set for out-of-class work.
- Formal and informal testing.

Later, at the intermediate or upper-intermediate levels, "*writing can serve as a goal in itself*" (Byrne 1991:7). Apart from the need for writing as one of the outcomes of a course, most students will have to take a written examination at some point of their language study.

Not only Byrne but also Scrivener (2005:192) ponders why we should include work on writing in a course. He states the following reasons:

- Many students have specific needs – academic study, examination preparation or Business English are common areas where written work is still important;
- students are likely to take notes in lessons;
- writing involves a different kind of mental process, there is more time to think, to reflect, to prepare, to rehearse, to make mistakes and to find alternative and better solutions;
- and as well as Byrne he thinks that it can give teachers a break, quieten down a noisy class, change the mood and pace of a lesson.

Penny Ur (2006:169) asks whether we should teach writing although it is not the primary focus of a syllabus. Her advice is, and the author of this diploma thesis strongly agrees with it, that neither we nor the students know about the future. Some of them might find themselves in a situation where they need to write. Learning to write effectively has value in itself as part of the long-term education process, and should not be evaluated only on whether it is immediately profitable or not.

Scrivener (2005:193) and other authors express that for many teachers, teaching the skill of writing seems to be mainly setting a writing task, leaving the students to do it often as homework, then collect it and mark. Some teachers believe that writing is essentially an individual activity.

Many teachers present a writing task as “write a story about...” and “hand it in by...” Scrivener (2005:194), however, says that these writing activities represent only a small part of a normal person’s writing. Teachers should provide their students mainly with a range of real-life writing tasks they might face one day. The tasks ought to be relevant to their needs. He also claims that a student can become a better writer by being encouraged and helped when following a series of pre-writing and writing steps before the final text is produced, and becoming more aware of that preparation process, so that it can be done independently in future.

Further, Scrivener speaks about the importance to inform the students why the writing work is done. If writing just to please the teacher is the case, there is probably low motivation and the quality of writing may be questioned. Strategies to provide audience and purpose are (Scrivener 2005:201):

- do a Needs Analysis with students and then base writing work on stated needs, i.e. using task types, contexts and situations directly relevant to students;
- think carefully what will happen with the finished work;
- do not give feedback only on accuracy of language, include comments whether the writing is appropriate for the task type and is well targeted at the probable reader;
- although teachers have very little idea about a class's needs (a short general English course), they can still select writing tasks that are likely to reflect things that students may need to write in real life.

What should teachers teach the students? The following learners' needs are based on Byrne's list (1991:6):

- teach the learners how to write – the spoken and written forms of the language differ and writing is actually a different way of communication from speech, it implies that writing skills require special training;
- provide experience of the written language – writing has to be preceded and accompanied by wide exposure to adequate models of written language;
- show the ways the written language functions as a system of communication – establish and maintain contact with readers in order to get the message across;
- teach the learners how to write texts – students should be given opportunities to practise organising sentences into coherent texts and to form acceptable paragraphs;
- teach the learners how to write different kinds of texts – students have to be able to select an appropriate style depending on what they are writing about, for whom and in a suitable form;

- make the writing tasks realistic and relevant – teachers should give the students the feeling they are writing to or for somebody and not only for the teacher to evaluate it;
- integrate with other skills – whenever possible, introduce writing activities that lead to or from the use of other skills, so that the students see writing as a real task;
- use a variety of techniques and practice formats – do not let the students become bored with the same tasks over and over again; choose tasks appropriate for their levels so that they are not discouraged or demotivated;
- provide support and be sympathetic – there are different roles teachers play in writing activities and the most important is to surrender the role of a judge (except when writing is being tested or examined); do not concentrate only on what is wrong in a text and look at what the students have succeeded in doing.

The methodologists (Scrivener, Byrne) agree that writing work in an EFL class is a scale of how much restriction, help and control is offered, from copying to unguided writing (Scrivener 2005:193):

- **COPYING** Students practise forming letter shapes in a handwriting book, note down substitution tables from the board, copy examples from a textbook, etc.
- **DOING EXERCISES** Students write single words phrases, sentences, etc. in response to very tightly focused tasks with limited options and limited opportunities for creativity or getting things wrong.
- **GUIDED WRITING** A teacher guides students to write longer texts in quite restricted or controlled tasks by offering samples, models, possibly useful language items, advice, organisation frameworks.
- **PROCESS WRITING** Students write what they want to, with help, encouragement and feedback from a teacher and others throughout the process of choosing a topic, gathering ideas, organising thoughts, drafting.

- **UNGUIDED WRITING** Students write freely without overt guidance, assistance or feedback during the writing process, though a title or task may be set, and work may be marked later.

T TYPOLOGY OF WRITING TASKS

There are various types of writing activities in EFL classes of elementary to intermediate students. The following classification is adapted after Donne Byrne (1991:34 – 47).

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

At an elementary level students have a small amount of language at their disposal. According to Byrne, they have acquired their knowledge through reading and oral interaction. Writing activities at this stage can be used to reinforce the materials learned orally, variety of activities in the classroom and out of class. Byrne suggests the following writing activities for this level:

Copying

Copying is a great activity for those with problems at the graphological level and those learning new graphic symbols. It helps teach spelling or reinforces sentence structures. It is also an aid to retention of new vocabulary or grammar points. Moreover, in real-life situations we often copy addresses, telephone numbers, and bus or train departure times. However, teachers have to make sure that copying will not become a classroom routine or just a way of filling time in a lesson. Also, the learners have to know that they have done copying for some purpose.

Examples of copying activities:

- Making reference lists in the form of lexical sets, such as clothes, furniture, food;
- Putting a list of words in alphabetical order;
- Putting words in categories (arranging a list of words under headings);
- Doing puzzles;
- Playing bingo.

Reinforcement activities (dialogue writing, parallel writing, dictation)

The language learned orally can be strengthened by reinforcement activities.

Examples of dialogue writing:

- Writing parallel pieces of dialogue with the help of keywords;
- Completing a dialogue, choosing from a list of jumbled sentences;
- Putting sentences in order to form a dialogue;
- Provide the students with a dialogue frame, which they have to complete with ideas of their own;

Parallel writing

Students are given model texts and asked to write a similar text with the help of cues. These may be verbal or visual. The text may recycle items of spoken or written language.

Dictation

Dictation involves listening and the ability to transform what is heard into its written form. Activities should be based on language which students have already familiarised and therefore it can be useful as a reinforcement activity.

Sentence linking activities

These activities serve the purpose of familiarising students with the cohesive devices used in composing a text. Students can start to combine structures they have learned orally into sequences. It is necessary to introduce a number of basic linking devices such as: and, but, or, so, then, of course, etc.

Examples of sentence linking activities:

- Joining pairs of sentences through linking words to make one sentence;
- Completing a short text (a letter, a simple story) through using suitable linking words or phrases from a given list;
- Completing a text by inserting clauses and sentences from a jumbled list of items in the correct places.

Communication activities

Writing at this stage still reinforces the work done orally; it still can be used for the purpose of communication.

Examples:

- Students write instructions which other students in the class (or the teacher) have to carry out;
- Writing a sequence of instructions to be carried out using some linking devices;
- Students write to one another to ask for information;
- Students write short messages to one another in the form of a note or short letter;
- Students write short letters to one another which involve some form of a role-play (invitations to a party, request to bring certain items).

Writing for fun

Students will be writing questionnaires, puzzles, programmes and other pieces which they can also use for out-of-class work. It will usually be a pair or group work activity involving speaking as well. These activities are typically enjoyable and students get the opportunity to express themselves imaginatively.

Examples:

- Writing questionnaires;
- Writing quizzes;
- Writing puzzles;
- Writing programmes;
- Writing jumbled texts;
- Writing role descriptions;
- Writing mystery stories;
- Writing imaginary diaries;
- Writing about pictures.

PRE-INTERMEDIATE/INTERMEDIATE LEVEL (Byrne 1991:49-68)

Writing activities at these levels are still guided to a large extent. Continually expanding vocabulary and knowledge of grammar allow teachers to prepare more demanding tasks, and ones that are as varied as possible. These new activities still provide opportunities for reinforcing language learned orally; they should include a greater range of the resources of the written language (compound and complex sentences, other linking devices). The control over what students write should be reduced.

Reinforcement activities (dialogue writing, writing notes and letters, writing short reports)

There still exists the need for practising what has been learned orally. Nevertheless, a broader range of different text other than dialogue can now be used to introduce writing activities.

Examples of dialogue writing:

- Finishing incomplete dialogue with no further specification of words to be used;
- Writing a complete dialogue – an outline is given, but none of the actual words can be used;
- Writing a dialogue for which setting and some suggestions for the language to be used are given.

Examples of writing notes and letters:

- Students are given model texts and incomplete texts with suggestions or instructions how to complete it;
- Students complete a text by expanding notes;
- Students write the complete texts, they are given guidance for the content but not for the language to be used;

Examples of writing short reports:

- Completion of forms of various kinds;
- Students get model texts together with cues for writing parallel versions;
- Students are given model texts and after focused practice are asked to write a parallel one.

Sentence linking and sequencing activities

These activities draw from the knowledge learned at an elementary level. Practice should include formal letters, reports or expanding the basic kit of linking devices.

Examples:

- Completion of short texts by using suitable linking words or phrases; these words or phrases are presented in a list which is more extensive than the number of items omitted from the text; students may also be asked to supply their own devices;
- Combining sentences so that they form an acceptable sequence;
- Rewriting texts within the framework of a related outline;
- Formation of texts from a list of jumbled sentences;
- Writing texts based on a model that has a clear logical development.

Reproduction exercises

Students have to listen to a text which is read aloud to them. In contrast to dictation in which a piece of information is taken down after a piece of information, students listen to the complete text a number of times before they write it down. Afterwards, they have to reproduce the text they have heard as accurately as possible. Should their memory fail them, they can use their own words.

This type of activity integrates more skills. It involves careful listening and transformation of what is heard into its written form. Students have to focus on the overall meaning and appropriate words to deliver the meaning accurately.

To help the students, we can write key words on the board or students may be aloud to take notes during the final listening.

Communication activities (role-play activities, report writing activities)

The communication activities should correspond to the increasing knowledge of the students to express themselves through the written form of the language. The tasks should be on a much more extensive scale and be more challenging.

Examples of real role-play activities:

- The Estate Agency (students play estate agents and clients, they have to devise a form on which they can record information, later they fill in the form with the clients who want to buy a house or a flat);
- The Magazine Advice Column (half of the students write a letter asking for help with a personal problem, the second half answers the letter and gives advice);
- The News Desk (writing items of news, editing the items to produce a news bulletin);
- Job Vacancies (writing a letter of application for a job vacancy);
- Complaints (letters of complaints);
- Campaigns;
- Rules and regulations (to draw a list of rules and regulations to control a certain situation);
- Market research (questionnaires for a certain product).

Examples of report writing activities:

- Our town (describing different features of a town, compiling a tourist leaflet, a brochure, a report based on the described features);
- Public interviews (interviewing students/teachers in front of the class, editing the answers to an account of what was said);
- Private interviews;
- Book reports;
- Noticeboard (students write notices or ads for things they would like to buy or sell, hello messages, jokes);
- References (writing a character reference by students in the class for one another);
- Class/school wallsheets/newspapers/journals (editing a class wallsheet/newspapers/journals; students prepare items of class/school news, items of general items; they arrange it into an attractive format and they can publish or share it with the rest of the school/people outside of the school).

Writing for fun

The proficiency in the language increases and the students can build on their knowledge to prepare more engaging fun tasks.

Examples:

- Posing and answering problems (We need 1 000 pounds at once! Can you suggest some ways of getting or making money?);
- Writing clues for crosswords (reversed procedure: students get a filled-in crossword and have to come up with clues, the clues can consist of one sentence or a series of sentences: school – you go there to study; school – it's a very unpleasant place where they try to teach you things. It's like a kind of prison. You go there when you are six and you are free when you are fifteen.);
- Instructions for a game (a board game is presented to students and they have to write their own instructions for playing the game);
- Role descriptions/scenarios (students produce role descriptions/scenarios – might be based on characters/stories in their coursebooks – which can be used for simple simulation situations; the descriptions/scenarios should be amusing and can be later used to prepare a class performance);
- Inaccurate accounts;
- Jumbled stories;
- Jigsaw writing (a teacher cuts up a suitable picture with a clear overall structure, each group gets a piece or two of the picture and writes a short account of what is happening in the picture; after the descriptions are written the pictures are put away and students try to work out what the picture as a whole looks like from what they have written);
- Instructions for drawing a map or picture (reversal of a picture dictation: students first draw a map or a picture and then write instructions for drawing it; later pairs or groups of students exchange the instructions and try to draw one another's pictures);
- Headlines (students are presented one or more headlines and their task is to invent a relevant story, the stories should be imaginative, in the end their stories can be compared with the newspaper original).

Scrivener (2005:202) stresses the importance of introducing real-life writing tasks into a class. He suggests the following tasks which should involve contact with the world outside the classroom:

Real-life writing tasks and possible classroom work include:

Real-life purpose	Possible classroom work
You want to sell your second-hand bike.	You write a noticeboard ad or newspaper ad.
You want people to vote for you in the class election.	You design and write a poster or election leaflet.
You want to inform a colleague who phoned and when.	You write a memo.
You want to book a suitable hotel for a visit.	You fill in an Internet booking form.
You want to make people laugh.	You write three jokes in the class magazine.

Table 1 Real-life writing tasks

Source: Scrivener, Jim: *Learning Teaching*, p. 202

Besides the list of writing tasks, Scrivener recommends a typical route for classroom work which might involve some or all of the following steps (Scrivener 2005:194-195):

Number of steps	Task	Comments
1	Introduce the topic	Get students interested, maybe by reading a text (article, letter, advert, etc.) showing pictures, discussing some key issues, etc.
2	Introduce and summarise the main writing task	Make sure students are clear about what they have to do. They need to know the genre (magazine article, letter, formal

Number of steps	Task	Comments
		report), who they are writing for and why. Avoid bland, “genre-free text for no particular audience” writing tasks.
3	Brainstorm ideas	Whole class: use the board to collect as many ideas as possible. Small groups: speak and take notes.
4	Fast-write	A very good way to overcome “blank page” terror and get ideas flowing is to “fast-write”.
5	Select and reject ideas	What’s worth leaving out?
6	Sort and order ideas	Start to plan the structure of the text by arranging ideas.
7	Decide on specific requirements: style, information, layout, etc.	How is the text to be laid out, paragraphed, organised? Are there any special rules (e.g. if it’s a letter, report, etc.?) Are there things that must be included or stated in a certain way?
8	Focus on useful models	Help students to study one or more samples of written texts similar to the one they are writing. Focus on content, message, organisation, grammar, phrases, etc.
9	Plan the text	Use notes, sketches or cut-up cards to start organising a possible shape for the text.
10	Get feedback	At various points, you, other individual students or groups can read and make helpful comments and suggestions about

Number of steps	Task	Comments
		a text. This help may be on the content and message, the organisation, the language, etc.
11	Prepare draft(s)	Students often benefit from preparing a draft version before the final one. This gives them the chance to get reader reactions and corrections.
12	Edit	Students carefully go through their own text, checking if it says what they want it to, if it reads clearly and smoothly, if its language is correct, etc.
13	Prepare final text	Based on feedback, students write a finished text.
14	Readers	Rather than simply mark a text, it's great when students can respond to it in some more realistic ways.

Table 2 Possible classroom work on writing tasks

Source: Scrivener, Jim: *Learning Teaching*, p. 194

The most difficult part of any writing is getting started. Students may feel they do not have enough ideas to write about. With respect to this problem, Scrivener proposes a few strategies to generate the ideas (Scrivener 2005:197-199).

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a way to get the “*ideas creation engine*” running. It means “*opening your mind and letting ideas pour out.*” (Scrivener 2005:197) It is helpful to separate the ideas collection and the later critical review of those ideas.

A way to brainstorm in the class:

- write the topic or title in a circle in the middle of the board;
- tell students to call out anything that comes to their mind connected with the topic;
- write up everything on the board;
- there should be no discussion or comments at this stage – only ideas.

After the ideas are written on the board, students select those they like and can use, or there may be some discussion time in groups to continue the filtering process.

Text-starts (analyzing genre)

Much real-life writing is about looking at other texts and summarising, reporting, responding to them, selecting ideas from them, commenting on them, etc. Supplying “model texts” can be a good way to provide useful writing work for students and it practises reading/writing skills that are useful in professional life and academic research. The actual content of the texts offers a great deal of support in that there is something concrete to deal with and many ideas are already formulated. Some ideas provided by Scrivener (Scrivener 2005:197):

Resource material	Writing task
Information about a holiday location (pictures, description, list of attractions, etc.)	You are the copy-writer for the local tourist board. Write a two-paragraph advertisement for the place to encourage more visitors to come.
Full data and illustrations of three different up-to-date household products or gadgets. Possible extra information about consumer trends, the economy, etc.	You are a senior manager and will attend a meeting to decide on one new product to produce. Write a brief report on each product, then outline your recommendations as to which one to choose, with reasons.
A map of a town. Short descriptions of “ghosts” that are said to haunt specific	You are a local tour guide who has decided to start a “Ghost Walk” for tourists around town. Plan a route for the walk. Write a

Resource material	Writing task
buildings and locations.	short article for the local paper to publicise it.
Seven emails to your company pointing out problems with the delivery service.	You are the head of the delivery department. Write an email to the director summarising the problems and making recommendations.
A number of articles from different sources on the same news item; a letter from your friend asking if you've heard about the item and what you think about it.	Write a letter to your friend.
History articles, encyclopaedias, websites, etc.	Prepare a wall poster to interest and inform your friends about a historic topic.

Table 3 Resource materials for text starts/analyzing genre Source: Scrivener, Jim: *Learning Teaching*, p. 197

Tricia Hedge in her book *Writing* (Hedge 1988:96) proposes another typology of writing tasks:

1. Personal writing

Journals, diaries, shopping lists, reminders, packing lists, addresses, recipes;

2. Public writing

Letters of enquiry, complaint, request; form filling, membership applications;

3. Creative writing

Poems, stories, rhymes, drama, songs, autobiography;

4. Social writing

Letters, invitations, notes of condolence, thanks, congratulations; telephone messages, instructions to friends, families;

5. Study writing

Making notes while reading or from lectures, summaries, synopses, reviews, reports of experiments, workshops, visits; essays, bibliographies;

6. Institutional writing

Agendas, minutes, memoranda, reports, reviews, contracts, business letters, public notices, advertisements, posters, instructions, speeches, applications, CVs.

GIVING FEEDBACK

One of the important issues of the writing process is giving feedback. Getting back a piece of work full of comments in red pen can be discouraging, especially if the work is overloaded with information and the tone of the comments is negative. Scrivener (2005:202-205), Ur (2006:170-173) offer some alternatives:

- peer correction is good, however, students will expect the teacher to look at their work and may feel let down if it is only evaluated by other students;
- use differently-coloured pens or pencils;
- discuss the marking criteria with students – agree on a mark or grade;
- write the correct answers in the margin;
- use correction codes in the margin;
- underline all errors of one type (e.g., all verb-tense mistakes, all spelling mistakes, etc.);
- write a letter in reply;
- write nothing – discuss the work with individual students;
- only write a comment about the meaning and the message of the piece;
- devise an exercise, quiz, game;
- get students to create the exercise themselves based on their own mistakes.

Many teachers use correction codes. These are codes that indicate where an error is and what type of error it is. Examples of correction codes are following (Byrne 1991:125):

SYMBOL	MEANING
S	Incorrect spelling
WO	Wrong word order
T	Wrong tense
C	Concord (subject and verb do not agree)
WF	Wrong form
S/P	Singular or plural form wrong
Λ	Something has been left out
[]	Something is not necessary
? M	Meaning is not clear
NA	The usage is not appropriate
P	Punctuation wrong

Table 4 Correction codes

Source: Byrne, Donn: *Teaching Writing Skills*, p. 125

Feedback should be given by the teacher during the writing activity; he/she should not wait until the text is completed. Scrivener (2005:203) points out the most useful comments are those that will have an impact as the writing is evolving; these will be useful from as many different readers as possible, from fellow students just as much as from teachers.

Penny Ur (2006:170) considers several questions related to giving feedback. She asks what feedback should be mainly on: language, content or organisation. She answers that the most important thing in a student's piece of writing is its content: whether the ideas are arranged in a way that is easy to follow and pleasing to read. Finally, there is the question of language forms: whether the grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation are of an acceptable standard of accuracy. She believes that many teachers agree that content and organisation are important, but find themselves relating mainly to language forms in their feedback. The reasons are that mistakes in spelling or grammar catch the eye and seem to demand to be corrected; they are difficult to ignore. Students also want their

language mistakes to be corrected. Language mistakes are far more easily and quickly diagnosed and corrected than ones of content and organisation.

Ur (2006:171) advises that teachers should correct language mistakes; the problem is how to do so without conveying the message that these are the only, or main, basis for evaluation of a piece of writing. One possibility is to note corrections within the body of the text, and devote comments at the end to matters of content and organisation, followed by the evaluation. Alternatively, we may correct mistakes and make suggestions as to content and organisation, but not evaluate; and give the evaluation only on the basis of the rewritten, polished version.

Further, Ur ponders whether all the mistakes should be corrected. Ur (2006:171) says that the correction of mistakes is part of the language instruction, but too much of it can be discouraging and demoralising. Also, teachers often over-emphasise the language mistakes, and it distracts both learners' and teachers' attention from the important aspects of content and organisation. Teachers can correct only mistakes that might lead to misunderstanding or confusion, and/or those which are very basic.

The third question Ur (Ur 2006:171) poses is whether learners ought to rewrite and incorporate corrections. It helps reinforce the learning of the correct forms and therefore is advisable to insist on students rewriting it. However, if teachers demand rewriting, the students have a right to demand from teachers to reread what they have done.

Lastly, should we let students correct or give feedback on each other's written work? In Ur's opinion (Ur 2006: 172) peer-correcting can be a time-saving and useful technique. But peer-correction does not release teachers from checking and evaluating student writing; but it can be a substitute for first-draft reading. Students can work together on their first drafts, giving each other feedback on content, language and organisation; they then rewrite and give in the final version to the teacher. For peer-correction to be efficient, a good classroom rapport should be established by the teacher and the students.

THE ROLES OF TEACHERS

A teacher in an EFL class has many roles. In general, the roles within the classroom change every minute and with every activity. A teacher is, in Harmer's view (Harmer 2001:58 – 59), a controller, an organiser, an assessor, a prompter, a participant, a resource, a tutor, and an observer. When it comes to writing activities, a teacher also has to fulfil the roles of a motivator, a resource provided, and a feedback provider (Harmer 2001:261):

- a motivator – teachers should motivate the students by using various strategies and means, establish good rapport in the classroom, encourage and help generate ideas;
- resource – be the supplier of information, model texts; be available for advice and suggestions;
- feedback provider – an adequate technique for giving feedback ought to be acquired, teachers should not sound too negative, feedback should not focus on linguistic items and organisation only but also the content; it is helpful if teachers through the correction of writing tasks encourage and promote further students' language development.

Scrivener (2005:194) lists concrete ways of helping students during writing tasks.

Teachers can help the learners to:

- choose a topic, a genre;
- get ideas and discuss them with others to get new perspectives;
- select between ideas and sequence them;
- make notes, diagrams, etc. to help organise ideas;
- find grammar and lexis suitable for the text;
- do practice exercises on language items that will be useful;
- study samples and model texts similar to what they want to write;
- plan the organisation of their text;
- draft a rough text;
- get feedback on content;
- get feedback on language use;
- co-write sections of text in groups;
- make alternations and rewrites;

- write a final version;
- find appropriate readers.

To summarize the roles of teachers in a classroom, it is important to realise that they are there especially for the students and not vice versa, the students are not there for them. Teachers should be prepared to use writing tasks; they should include them and make them as realistic as possible. It is advisable that teachers help their students overcome the fear of any writing through different means, such as good motivation, providing support and assistance, and giving feedback which is not discouraging.

3 Practical part

In chapter 2 the basic methodology underlying the teaching of writing was presented. The following section includes twenty writing activities. All these activities are self-contained and can be used as independent lessons. The activities were collected from May 2006 to March 2007. The final selection of the activities derives from the typologies presented in the theoretical part. My aim was to include at least one activity from the presented typologies so that different students' needs can be met.

The testing of chosen activities was accomplished in classes of general English that I have been teaching since September 2006. The concrete activities were realised during September 2006 and March 2007. I chose four groups of elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate students. Three of the groups are in-company courses and the last one is a course run by an institution for further studies.

Group 1

A group of 17 students, all of whom are teachers of English at primary schools. Their level of English is intermediate.

Group 2 An in-company course, 2 students at the pre-intermediate level.

Group 3 An in-company course, 2 students at the elementary level.

Group 4 An in-company course, 1 student at the pre-intermediate level.

For better orientation, I include the list of activities:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Paul's business trip | 11. Motorcars |
| 2. We're millionaires! | 12. Learning a foreign language |
| 3. Poem piece | 13. True sentences |
| 4. In a café | 14. Dictators of the world |
| 5. Journals | 15. Mystery stories |
| 6. Email | 16. It's a whatsit |
| 7. Country quiz | 17. Mini sagas |
| 8. More gain, less pain | 18. Dinner's in the oven |
| 9. Questionnaires | 19. Writing class |
| 10. Imagining dialogues | 20. A cartoon adventure |

1 Paul's business trip

Activity:	punctuating a text
Focus:	writing conventions
Level:	elementary
Time:	10 minutes
Preparation:	handouts with the unpunctuated text
Source:	Harmer, J.: <i>The Practice of English Language Teaching</i> , Longman, 2001, p. 262

In class:

Students practise basic punctuation such as capital letters, commas, apostrophes and full stops. To complete the task, students need to be aware of where a speaker would pause to breathe when reading the text out loud, as this will help them punctuate the task correctly.

While and after they listen, they have to change the unpunctuated text by using capital letters, commas, apostrophes and full stops. As a help, the ends of the first two sentences are given.

it was friday and it was pauls big business trip to new york in america/he got up at 5 am got dressed had a cup of coffee and read the newspaper/at 6 am a taxi arrived to take him to london airport paul locked the door and put his bags in the taxi but he left his briefcase in the house his business papers his money his credit cards his plane ticket and his passport were all in his briefcase luckily the taxi driver asked paul if he had his ticket paul ran back into the house and got his briefcase but this time he ran out of the house and left his keys inside

Comments:

I used this exercise in several classes of elementary and pre-intermediate students. Firstly, I elicited all possible uses of capital letters and commas in English from the students. I didn't pay attention to elicitation of apostrophes and full stops. Reason: full stops were obvious and the first two sentences were illustrated. Apostrophes: there was one missing and I expected the students to be able to find it as they have already studied its use.

All students were at ease in identifying capital letters and full stops. Most of them failed to mark the apostrophe although they knew there was one missing. I think they simply failed to notice. After I stressed the apostrophe, they found it easily.

Commas presented a bigger problem, in particular for elementary levels: they did not punctuate the commas in listing (*papers, his money, his credit card, ...*).

This is a useful exercise as the punctuation conventions in English differ from Czech. The text is not boring and the students liked it.

Please see appendix 1.

2 We're millionaires!

Activity:	dictation
Focus:	transforming spoken figures into their written forms
Level:	pre-intermediate
Time:	10-15 minutes
Preparation:	no preparation is needed
Source:	Soars, John and Liz: <i>New Headway English Course</i> (beginner), OUP, 2002, p. 69

In class:

Pre-activity stage:

In a class of pre-intermediate students, I decided to use a dictation as a means of revising numbers and dates. I had not used dictation in this class before therefore I chose an easy article from the New Headway English Course series.

I instructed the students to write down word after word and to transform the numbers into their written form. The text of the dictation:

"We're millionaires!"

In August 1999 three friends, Jacques Proust, Guy Fadat, and Francois Leclerc, were on holiday in the town of Laraque in France. On Sunday they went shopping in the market and they saw a dirty, old painting of the Virgin Mary. They bought it for 1,400 francs and they took it to Paris. In Paris, an expert said that the painting was by Leonardo da Vinci and it was worth 500,000,000 francs. The man in Laraque market said: 'I was happy to sell the painting but now I'm very upset. I don't want to think about it!

Comments:

In order not to confuse the students I simplified the French names into "Frank, Jack and Guy". When I introduced the activity, students commented that they had

not written Czech dictation for ages and had never written dictation in English. I repeated the text several times and adapted the pace of my voice to suit their need. Although instructions to put down the written form of the numbers were given, students failed to do so. When I enquired into the reasons, they said they focused on the words to write them correctly rather than numbers. Please see appendix 2.

3 Poem piece

Activity:	running dictation
Focus:	writing for fun, concentrating on writing correctly
Level:	intermediate
Time:	10 minutes
Materials:	worksheets with the text
Source:	Harmer, J.: <i>The Practice of English Language Teaching</i> , Longman, 2001, p. 264

In class:

In this exercise students dictate to each other. Students are put into groups. The teacher puts an A4 copy of the following poem on a table at the front of the classroom. Each group sends a representative to the front of the class to read only one line of the poem, memorise it, and then run back to their group and dictate the line. When this has happened, groups send a second (and then a third) representative to read the second (and third) line(s) and take that back to their groups and dictate it. The activity goes on until one group has the whole poem.

*A man bought a piano for his wife
which she constantly tunes
and polishes. He says her hands and fingers
are less flexible than once they were
which is depressing.
She came home and she found it there,
a big surprise. Its brown respectability
dominates the room. He watches her straight back
and fumbling fingers in the evening city, lit
by brakes and klaxons.*

Comments:

This activity was tested on students of G1. It was a new kind of activity for them and they were quite curious and keen on winning. I did not pre-teach any vocabulary. Although the instruction to memorise one line each was given, I noticed that some students "cheated" and memorised the lines the student before had failed to put down correctly. Also, I would not use the same text again as the students found problems in memorising some words which were new to them or difficult to keep in mind. I recommend this type of activity, however, it is better to use more appropriate texts, closer to the topics students have just studied.

4 In a cafe

Activity:	parallel dialogue writing
Focus:	practical English in its written form
Level:	pre-intermediate upwards
Time:	25 minutes
Materials:	model dialogues
Source:	Byrne, D.: <i>Teaching Writing Skills</i> , Longman, 1991, p. 50

I devised this activity under the influence of Donn Byrne and his activity of parallel dialogue writing (please see 2.4.1. of this thesis for details). I used a conversation from New Headway Pre-Intermediate (Soars, J. and L.) as a model dialogue for G2. My aim was to reinforce the practical English used in shops. Although we were practising the functional English for some time, one of the students still failed to remember and produce the lines correctly. He managed to do so only after my questions and guidance. However, the second student was very effective, producing a dialogue without further consulting either the model or the book. Please see appendix 3.

5 Journals

Activity:	journal writing
Focus:	writing reflections on students' own progress
Level:	elementary upwards
Time:	students' free time
Materials:	a notebook per student
Source:	Hedge, T. Writing, OUP, p. 66 (I learned about this activity a few years ago from a fellow teacher, however, this in-class description comes from the above-mentioned source).

This idea of using a writing journal or a book within English lessons is one many teachers have tried. It is a device which provides opportunities for writing practice. Time for writing can be built into a lesson or students are told to write at home and bring the journals for teacher to read. Each student is provided or buys a small notebook for their personal use.

The notebooks have to be accessible to the teacher but not other students (unless the students want to share them).

The students should write in the notebooks on anything that involves their study of English – their improvement, success, failure, feelings about learning English etc.

The writing is not evaluated or marked.

The entries in the journal will be responded to in the journals as an exchange between the student and the teacher only.

It is a more natural exchange of reflections, reactions and opinions. The interaction between the teacher and the student moves to a friendlier or more personal sphere.

Comments:

I set this activity as a half-term project in G1 in September 2006. The students had to write down their reflections on their own language development and progress, what causes the biggest problems, what they found interesting and what they would like to learn within the next week/month. Apart from one girl, the students did not like this activity at all and often failed to bring it back to me for reading! I asked them to write their journals in their spare moments at home and I think that

was a mistake. I should have devoted a few minutes of a lesson to writing the journal. I am sure the results and students' attitude would have been better.

6 Email

Activity:	writing to real people
Focus:	writing simple letters
Level:	elementary upwards
Time:	45 minutes
Materials:	newspapers and magazines, a model letter
Source:	Hedge, T. <i>Writing</i> , OUP, p. 86-87

Pen-friend or mouse-pal friend writing are well-known strategies that have been used in EFL classes for many years. Students can write letters of enquiries about language courses, summer schools, holidays, to MPs, fan clubs, local newspapers, or other students as they are.

Tricia Hedge suggests taking a look at newspapers and magazines that are full of advertisements, which provide a number of opportunities for students to write simple letters.

In class:

1. take an interesting advertisement or a small ad and discuss its content and language (abbreviations);
2. elicit from the class what needs to go into a letter of enquiry and derive a simple functional structure, such as saying where the advertisement was seen, expressing interest, giving any necessary personal information, asking for further details, etc.;
3. show the class the model letters and point out the important aspects of layout, appropriate endings;
4. give students time to browse through a newspaper or magazine to find an advertisement of interest (skim-reading session with a teacher acting as language and culture informant);
5. when students have selected an advertisement, monitor them as each one writes a letter.

Comments:

I have adapted this activity for G3 – elementary students. When following a coursebook, their task was to write an email about themselves for a mouse-pal. The email had to be nicely structured into 4 paragraphs, each paragraph considering different issues (appearance, personal qualities). One student really sent it to me by email; before they had been used to handing me the task on a piece of paper. Please see appendix 4.

7 Country quiz

- Activity:** writing for fun, writing a quiz, filling in the quiz
- Focus:** the use of comparatives and superlatives in written forms
- Level:** pre-intermediate upwards
- Time:** 45 minutes
- Materials:** no
- Source:** Worksheet: “Language in Use – Pre-Intermediate, unit 15”, CUP 2003, downloaded from www.cambridge.org/elt in February 2007
Byrne, D.: *Teaching Writing Skills*, Longman, 1991, p. 43

Comment:

I was dealing with comparative and superlative structures in one of my one-to-one classes (G4). The worksheet we were filling in included a quiz activity aiming at practising the adjective structures. In accordance with Byrne’s typology (please see part 2.4.1.), I used it as a writing exercise.

I set it as homework – to prepare a quiz to test me about the Czech Republic, the students’ country, using the adjective structure, giving the student time to prepare the questions and answers. Her reaction to this homework was: *I will DO this homework*. Before, she often failed to do homework which I blame on her demanding job. The student prepared the questions; however, she did not have to time to check the answers!

I can imagine this activity to be engaging among more competitive students.

8 More gain, less pain

Activity:	group text analysis
Focus:	website feature article, expanding ideas
Level:	elementary upwards
Time:	50 minutes
Materials:	worksheets
Source:	Palmer, G.: <i>Writing Extra</i> , CUP, p. 70

In class:

1. Elicit the difference between *to get fit* x *to be fit/unfit* x *to keep fit*. Write on the board: *There is no gain without pain*. Discuss what it means and if they think exercise has to be painful to do any good.
2. Put the students in groups of 4. Give out a copy of the top part of the web page, including Section 1, to each group. Explain that it is a part of a web page about keeping fit. Ask them to decide, as a group, what kind of people visit the website (parents who think their children are unfit).
3. Ask the groups to reread Section 1 and find the three pieces of advice.
4. Elicit how the structure of the section reinforces the message, i.e. a statement (*Show your kids...*), advice (*You should...*), a positive possibility (*You could...*).
5. Give out one copy of the remaining sections of the cut-up web page per group. Tell them to read the headers of each section and decide as a group what each might be about.
6. Divide each group in half and tell the pairs to take two of the sections each and think of three pieces of advice to include in each. Tell the students to discuss their answers in their group.
7. Tell the pairs to write in complete sentences on both sections of the web page. When they have finished, tell them to swap with the other pair in their group, read the new sections and check they understand the advice given.
8. Give out one copy of the web page per group. In groups tell them to combine their sections into one web page, checking for accuracy as they redraft the web page.

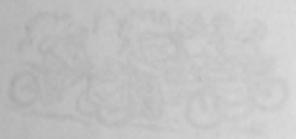
Comment:

Although this activity is a group activity, I used it in a one-to-one class (G4). The student found the activity interesting and "something different than usual". We elicited the language for reinforcing the message, but she did not use it in all sentences she wrote. I would like to try the activity in bigger classes (more ideas, discussion).

More gain, less pain ...

... encourage your kids to keep fit

1 Mum and Dad - get fit



Show your kids how to do it - if they see you exercising regularly, they're more likely to enjoy it themselves. You should spend some every day keeping fit - maybe exercising in bits of 30-45 mins - anything like you shouldn't stop, walk on a cycle when shopping, lift things, the car at home and cycle to work, use the bus to go to the shops. You could even take the bus with you.

2 Little kids - keeping fit starts early ...



3 Don't overdo it!



4 It's not as hard as you think!



5 Teenagers: keep on keeping fit!



Web Page

Address: <http://www.kidskeepfit.org>

Navigation icons: Home, Back, Forward, Stop, Reload, Print, Mail, Search, Home, Stop, Refresh, Exit

- Beauty
- Kids
- FAQs

More gain, less pain encourage your kids to keep fit

1 Mum and Dad – get fit!



Show your kids how to do it – if they see you enjoying exercise, they're more likely to enjoy it themselves. You should spend time every day keeping fit: jogging, exercising in front of the TV ... anything! And you shouldn't drive, walk: on those small shopping trips, leave the car at home and cycle or walk the 100 metres to the shop. You could even take the kids with you!

2 Little kids – keeping fit starts early ...



3 Don't overdo it!



4 It's not all hard work!



5 Teenagers: keep on keeping fit



9 Questionnaire

Activity:	asking questions and giving answers
Focus:	question formation in written form
Level:	pre-intermediate upwards
Time:	60 minutes
Materials:	newspapers, magazines with advertisements
Source:	White, R.V. <i>Teaching Written English</i> , Heinemann International, 1980, p. 92-98

In class:

1. students get a number of answers to questions about a house to rent; these answers include information on points as size, amenities, and the terms of a lease on the house;
2. students have to read the information and write questions which will elicit the information;

Example:

Answer

The nearest schools are within half a mile.

Question

How far is it to the

nearest school?

3. after the questions have been written down, use them with the students as the basis for a questionnaire; this questionnaire is to be part of a handbook of advice for overseas visitors who wish to rent a house in Britain;
4. the questions:
 - a. *289 Sunbury Avenue, Slough*
 - b. *£140 per month*
 - c. *The nearest schools are within half a mile.*
 - d. *The shops are at the top of the street.*
 - e. *There is a bus route to the centre of town at the bottom of the street.*
 - f. *There is a park and children's playground 5 minutes' walk away.*
 - g. *There is a large sitting room, a small dining room, a kitchen, three bedrooms, a separate bathroom and a toilet. There is also a small utility room behind the garage.*

- h. *There is an automatic washing machine, a tumble drier, and a refrigerator. The house has gas-fired central heating and double-glazing throughout. There is a telephone and television.*
- i. *There is a small garden – 10 metres by 15 metres.*
- j. *The tenant is responsible for maintaining the garden. There are garden tools for this purpose.*
- k. *The tenant is responsible for paying telephone bills.*
- l. *The tenant is responsible for paying the television licence.*
- m. *The tenant is responsible for paying local property rates.*
- n. *Sub-letting to another tenant is not permitted.*
- o. *Two references are required. One of these should be from a bank.*
- p. *A deposit equivalent to one month's rent is payable in advance. The deposit is returnable on satisfactory completion of the lease.*
- q. *Rent is payable in advance on the last day of each month.*
- r. *The lease is for a period of 18 months.*
- s. *The tenant has to supply bed linen and towels.*

5. after using the questionnaire themselves, students go on to devise their own questionnaire on a topic of current or local interest;
6. the "house questionnaires" can be used as a basis for a report or an article for information brochures, websites, magazines for tourists or expatriates.

White's rationale for this activity:

Asking questions and giving answers is a skill in its own right. We write questions much less frequently than we write statements. It is therefore difficult to find authentic contexts for presenting and practising questions in written form. Questionnaires are one context in which written questions occur authentically.

10 Imagining dialogues

Activity:	a letter of application
Focus:	letter conventions
Level:	elementary upwards
Time:	60 minutes
Preparation:	1. a letter of application as a model letter which can be analysed in terms of the questions; 2. prompts for letter writing appropriate to the students (job advertisements, language courses)
Source:	Hedge, T. <i>Writing</i> , OUP, p. 37

In class:

1. hand out the copies of a model letter. Ask the students to imagine the conversation between the writer of the letter and the employer and work out the questions which might raise during the conversation;
2. elicit a possible first question and write it on the board;
3. students work in pairs and continue listing the remaining questions relevant to the letter;
4. elicit the questions and write them on the board;
5. give out copies of appropriate advertisements for the students to study;
6. students should work out and write down a list of questions which the employer might ask;
7. pair work – students check each other's questions and suggest additions, deletions or modifications;
8. students start working on a first draft of the letter according to the set of questions.

Hedge's rationale for this activity:

This exercise is a useful planning device for writing letters. Students imagine a conversation that might replace the letter. In fact, they visualise their audience and work out the dialogue that would happen instead of writing a letter. They can imagine the questions the reader might ask. This technique ensures that all the relevant content is included and ordered in a sensible manner. It works well with formal letters (making requests, applications).

11 Motorcars

Activity:	describing objects
Focus:	Adjectives of colour and shape
Level:	Vocabulary of measurement (size and weight)
Time:	<i>Is</i> and <i>has</i>
Materials:	Sentence patterns: subject + verb (be) + complement
Source:	subject + verb (have) + object
In class:	a + singular countable noun zero article + uncountable noun
Level:	elementary upwards
Time:	40 minutes
Materials:	pictures of different objects
Source:	White, R.V. <i>Teaching Written English</i> , Heinemann International, 1980, p. 42-53

In class:

1. collect some coloured pictures of cars; provide students with five or six such pictures and three reading texts; an example:
This car is expensive. It has a big motor and it is fast. It has five seats and a large boot. It is from Germany.
2. the students match the descriptions to the pictures;
3. after they have matched the illustrations to the texts, they can write three parallel descriptions of their own, based on the remaining pictures;
4. if the students are working in groups of four or five, the groups can swap their sets of pictures and descriptions that they have written and each group has to match the new pictures and texts;

12 Learning a foreign language

Activity:	fast writing
Focus:	generating of ideas, brainstorming
Level:	pre-intermediate upwards
Time:	10 minutes
Materials:	no preparation, a board or an overhead projector (OHP) should be ready
Source:	Hedge, T. <i>Writing</i> , OUP, p. 44
In class:	

1. explain to the students the technique and point out it is a useful way of getting started should they have problems of developing ideas for a theme;
2. ask students to brainstorm individually for a few minutes and jot down their experiences of learning a foreign language, noting anything that occurs to them;
3. a teacher can make himself/herself a guinea-pig to demonstrate fast writing to the students (jot down some ideas and then write freely and quickly on the board or an OHP, elaborate on the jotted ideas, cover about 11 lines);
4. choose a part of your writing and elaborate it further;
5. students should now start the same process and work quietly by themselves checking their notes for further point to fastwrite about;
6. students should end up with a collection of partially drafted pieces of writing which can now be redrafted with a close look at accurate language, organization and development of the theme;
7. any topic can be used.

13 True sentences

Activity:	using English verbs
Focus:	using tenses appropriately in a written form
Level:	intermediate
Time:	up to 75 minutes
Materials:	large sheets of paper or a board
Source:	Brookes, A., Grundy, P. <i>Writing for Study Purposes (A teacher's guide to developing individual writing skills)</i> , CUP, p. 140-141

In class:

1. ask each student to think of a personal belonging of special significance to them – something they own now or a childhood belonging. The students should write the names of their belonging on the board;
2. reduce the number of belongings on the board to one for every five students, remove the others from the board, and write the names of the owners beside the remaining belongings; now ask the students to choose one of the belongings; make sure that no one chooses in their own belongings;
3. each student should now write five separate sentences about the belonging they have chosen and its owner; their sentences must use any five different verb forms chosen from a selection provided by the teacher; the purpose is to write interesting sentences which turn out to be true, for example: *'Xiao-ling must have ridden her bicycle a lot when she was young because she hates walking so much.'*
4. offer students the choice of five of the following forms:

past simple	past progressive	must have
present perfect	past perfect	could have
present perfect continuous	past perfect continuous	
used to	might have	

It is important to offer a choice of forms, which can be illustrated with examples if necessary, so that the writers can concentrate on writing what will turn out to be true sentences;

5. when the writing is over, there will be a large number of sentences to be read aloud; a criterion will be needed for which sentences are to be read,

i.e.: those relating to object A, those featuring form B or sentences students want to offer because they are confident of their truth; to be written on the board or on a wallchart.

14 Dictators of the world

Activity:	forecasting
Focus:	writing for a purpose
Level:	intermediate
Time:	60 to 75 minutes
Materials:	none
Source:	Brookes, A., Grundy, P. <i>Writing for Study Purposes (A teacher's guide to developing individual writing skills)</i> , CUP, p. 105-106

In class:

1. each student lists the first six things they would do if they became dictators of the world tomorrow;
2. working in groups of five or six, each group listens to the orders of all its members and then decides which particular student's dictatorial aspirations to work with;
3. the two questions each group should then consider are what short-term and long-term forecasts it is possible to make for the world given the six changes proposed;
4. the groups after that work towards producing a two or three paragraph agreed prognosis;
5. A possible follow-up is to collect in the forecasts and photocopy two or three of them together with lists of the six changes underlying each. These copies are later distributed to members of the class, who make adjustments to them so as to bring the forecasts into line with their own views. This is a reviewing phase which helps to highlight the options in forecasting writing.

15 Mystery stories

- Activity:** writing mystery stories
- Focus:** speaking using past tenses
- Planning background for a narrative
- Writing narrative using linking words, adverbs of time
- Writing narrative using past simple, continuous, and depending on the level, past and/or present perfect.
- Level:** pre-intermediate upwards
- Time:** 1 x 90-minute class
- Materials:** miscellaneous objects to have one per student and a few extras to use as for models
- Source:** Brigitta Kral, the seminar "Writing Rocks!" 23 March 2007, Oxford TEFL, Prague

In class:

1. write "mystery stories" on the board and create a word web; discuss what makes a mystery story engaging, what types of mysteries there might be, what authors students know;
2. create a chart on the board with spaces for: Where? When? Who? What? Why?
3. as a class, choose 3-4 cities and different time periods for each city (it is suitable to choose the time periods on the tenses you want to practice);
4. place objects on the floor in the centre of a room and gather students around in circle;
5. model completing the chart with one item:

Where?	England
When?	The Renaissance
What?	Instant stain remover pen
Who?	Queen Elizabeth
Why?	She was a messy eater
6. going around the circle, each student must answer the questions for one object;
7. after completing the chart, assign students a location (groups, pairs, individuals). They must create a one-paragraph mystery story that

incorporates at least two of the items and characters found in their city.
The stories must have a clear beginning, middle and end;

8. teachers should circulate and provide assistance and feedback;
later, students can choose to share stories verbally or in writing and vote for the best story.

16 It's a whatsit

Activity: group quiz

Focus: dictionary definition

Level: intermediate

Time: 60-70 minutes

Materials: worksheets

Source: Palmer, G.: *Writing Extra*, CUP, p. 60

In class:

1. Tell the students you have completely lost your memory. Pick up a pen and elicit what it is and its function. Write: *It's a thing which you use for writing.*
2. Put the students in pairs and hand out a copy of the Mind Map for each pair. Go through the map and ask the students to add two more machines/devices and tools to the lists and complete the definitions. After a few minutes, ask them to check their answers with another pair. Feedback as a whole class.
3. Give each pair a copy of the Quiz Clue for a dresser, without the picture. Read it through as a whole class, checking difficult vocabulary. Give the pairs one minute, without dictionaries, to decide the correct definition.
4. After a minute, write a, b and c on the board. Tell the students to vote for the correct definition.
5. Give each pair a copy of the picture of the dresser. Feedback the correct definition.
6. Divide the class into 2 groups. Give each group enough copies of the corresponding Quiz Clue, without the picture, so that a pair has a copy. Tell them to discuss the clues in their groups and decide the correct definition. After five minutes, give out the Quiz Clue pictures and feedback.

7. As a whole class, brainstorm the structures used in the definitions. Write this on the board:

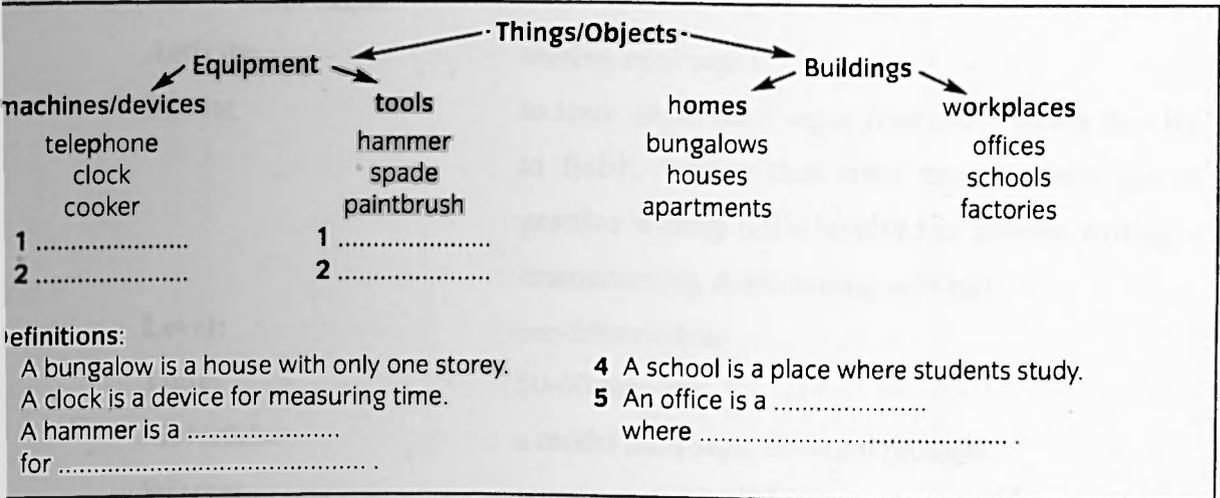
with/consisting of.....parts

A specific noun is a general noun (used)to+ infinitive.../for verb+ing...

which/that/who/where

8. Put the students in pair and show each pair a different Picture Cue. Tell them to think of two words that are similar to the name of the object but not write them down. If they can't think of two similar real English words, ask them to invent them. Ask them to write down definitions for all three words.
9. When the students have had sufficient time, ask them to join another pair as a group of four and swap definitions. Ask them to check that the other pairs' definitions can be understood and are accurate English. Tell them to feedback to each other and redraft if necessary.
10. Explain to each group they are a team. Ask them to join another team and swap their definitions. Tell them to decide the correct ones. When they have had sufficient time, they should check their answers together.

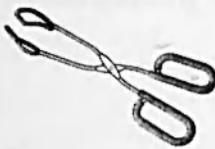
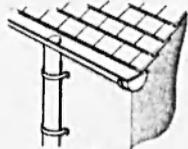
Map



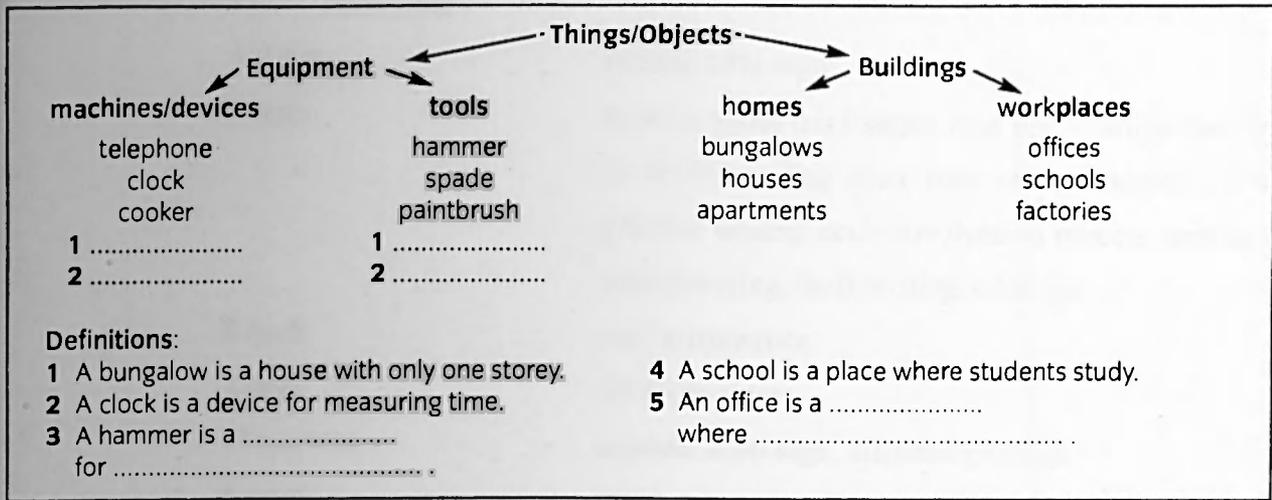
Clues

	<p>What is a dresser?</p> <p>Whole Class</p> <p>a a large tall piece of furniture with cupboards below and shelves on the top half</p> <p>b a liquid mixture, often containing oil, vinegar and herbs, which is added to food, esp. salads, to give flavour</p> <p>c a large model of a human being, used to show clothes in the window of a shop</p>
	<p>What is a corkscrew?</p> <p>Group 1</p> <p>a a tool for turning screws, which consists of a handle joined to a metal rod shaped at one end to fit in the cut in the top of the screw</p> <p>b a device for removing corks from bottles, which consists of a handle with a twisted metal rod to screw into the cork and pull it out</p> <p>c a person or thing that is especially good, attractive or amusing</p>
	<p>What is a saucer?</p> <p>Group 2</p> <p>a a man who is believed to have magical powers and who uses them to harm or help other people</p> <p>b a deep round pan with straight sides, usually with a handle and a lid, used for cooking things over heat</p> <p>c a small curved plate which you put a cup on</p>

Cues

 radiator	 blender	 grater	 steamer	 duster
 skylight	 nail file	 tongs	 gutter	

Ind Map



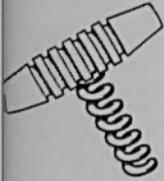
Quiz Clues



What is a dresser?

Whole Class

- a a large tall piece of furniture with cupboards below and shelves on the top half
- b a liquid mixture, often containing oil, vinegar and herbs, which is added to food, esp. salads, to give flavour
- c a large model of a human being, used to show clothes in the window of a shop



What is a corkscrew?

Group 1

- a a tool for turning screws, which consists of a handle joined to a metal rod shaped at one end to fit in the cut in the top of the screw
- b a device for removing corks from bottles, which consists of a handle with a twisted metal rod to screw into the cork and pull it out
- c a person or thing that is especially good, attractive or amusing

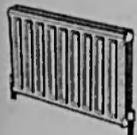


What is a saucer?

Group 2

- a a man who is believed to have magical powers and who uses them to harm or help other people
- b a deep round pan with straight sides, usually with a handle and a lid, used for cooking things over heat
- c a small curved plate which you put a cup on

Picture Cues



radiator



blender



grater



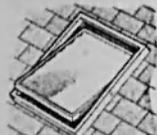
steamer



duster



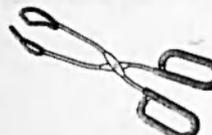
jigsaw



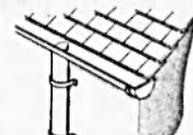
skylight



nail file



tongs



gutter

17 Mini sagas

Activity:	writing mini sagas
Focus:	to learn about mini sagas, read one – which they try to finish, writing their own ones; students get to practice writing skills involved in process writing – brainstorming, draft-writing, editing).
Level:	pre-intermediate
Time:	50-60 minutes
Materials:	a model mini saga, different prompts
Source:	www.onestopenglish.com , accessed February 2007

A mini saga is a piece of writing which has exactly fifty words, excluding the title, which can have up to fifteen words. A mini saga has to tell a story and have a beginning, middle and end. It cannot just be a description. The reasons to use mini sagas in EFL classes:

- Excellent vehicle for a short writing lesson;
- They are easy to read;
- They are easy task for the learners to understand;
- Writing fifty words does not sound difficult to the learners;
- They focus on accuracy – in the editing stage;
- They have the potential to be very motivating.

In class:

1. Write on the board the word saga. Ask students if they know what a saga is (a story about a group of people over a long period of time: e.g., Star Wars). Tell the students they are going to write a special kind of saga, a mini-saga.
2. Tell the students that before they write their own, they are going to read one. Pre-teach any difficult vocabulary;
3. Explain the background of mini sagas to the students. They are now going to write their own mini sagas in pairs. Give each pair a prompt to help them focus their writing. Ask them to brainstorm ideas on a piece of paper for their story. Kinds of prompts: a picture/a painting; a proverb; a song;

4. Students in pairs write the first draft of a very short story based on their prompt and ideas. They don't need to worry about the number of words at this stage.
5. Ask students to swap stories with another pair. Their task now is to make corrections to each others' story. Tell them to look for spelling, grammar and punctuation mistakes. Have a dictionary on hand to help them. Circulate and help pairs as needed.
6. The pairs return the corrected drafts to each other. Now the students should prepare the final draft. They must (1) rewrite the story with corrections and (2) make sure it is between 48 and 52 words exactly. They must also give their mini saga a title.
7. Put the mini sagas with their corresponding titles and prompts around the class. Direct students to read each others' mini sagas. You could have the class vote on which is the best one.

18 Dinner's in the oven

Activity:	paired matching, text analysis
Focus:	personal note
Level:	elementary
Time:	50-60 minutes
Materials:	worksheets
Source:	Palmer, G.: <i>Writing Extra</i> , CUP, p. 16
In class:	

1. Write on the board in the style of a brief note: *Gone to see Mum. Back for dinner. Steve.* Write on the board: *Who wrote this note? Why? Where are they? How old do you think they are? Who do you think they live with?* In pairs, ask the students to answer the questions. Feedback as a whole class. Do not confirm or reject any ideas.
Ask: Who writes notes in your house? Who are the notes to? What are they about?
2. Keep the students in pairs, and give each pair a set of Notes. Explain they are from three different households. Ask them to try to answer the questions on the board for each note. Feedback as a whole class.

3. Give the students the Shopping and Household cards. Explain they must match a note and three items of shopping to each household. Feedback. At this stage, ask students to justify their answers.
4. Ask the students to expand the notes into complete sentences. Brainstorm what was omitted in the notes: subject pronouns and auxiliary verbs.
5. Ask the students to each write a typical note for their own or a friend's household, in the same style as the notes they have seen. They must not use their real names.
6. In the same pairs, ask the students to swap notes and answer these two questions: *Do I understand this message? What does this note tell me about the household?* One student is A, the other is B. Tell them to discuss if the notes reveal enough about their household and then redraft the notes, with student A acting as a secretary and writing out both notes.
7. Ask each pair to think of three items of shopping for each of their households. Tell them to ensure the shopping reveals enough about their households. Student A should then write out the two shopping lists, one for each household.
8. Ask the students to write a description of their own household. Ask them to check them for accuracy and then ask student B to act as secretary and write out the two descriptions.
9. Join the pairs into groups of four. Ask each group to swap its Notes, Lists and Household with another group. Tell the groups to match the new Notes and Lists to the household and check their answers with the group they have swapped with.

Notes

<p>A</p> <p>Taken Ben to the vet. Dinner's in the oven.</p>	<p>B</p> <p>Out of milk. Can you get some on way back from work? Love you. P</p>	<p>C</p> <p>SUE, HANDS OFF MY FOOD!</p>
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Shopping

 <p>Dog food</p>	 <p>Aftershave</p>	 <p>Croissants</p>
 <p>Chips</p>	 <p>Burgers</p>	 <p>Belgian chocolates</p>
 <p>Salmon</p>	 <p>Nappies</p>	 <p>White sliced bread</p>

Households



Household 1: Philip is a computer consultant and Sue works in a shop. They have a ten-month-old baby called Ben.



Household 2: Peter is a university student who lives in a shared house.



Household 3: Sue and Tim have been married for 15 years and have a small dog called Ben. Sue is a bank manager and Tim is a teacher.

of an idea and chosen a form. Explain that they are going to continue with the process and, in pairs, write the flier. They should make the course appear relevant and exciting. If they want to, they can use the information in the Prospectus as a basis for their leaflet.

7. After ten minutes, ask each pair to swap their flier with another pair. Ask them to read the new flier and decide whether it would persuade them to join the course. Give each pair a copy of the First draft checklist and tell them to use the code to mark any areas where the flier could be improved.
8. After five minutes, ask the pairs to swap their fliers back and feedback to each other. Ask them to redraft their own flier to make it clearer and more appealing.
9. If there is time, give each pair a copy of the Second draft checklist and ask them to use it to check their draft for technical and grammatical errors.

College Prospectus

Writing Extra Tutor: Mr T Winton

In this evening course students will learn the basics of writing. The course examines the process of drafting, editing and writing a finished piece. Students will learn to write e-mails, letters, reports, fiction and much more.



Writer's Notes



<p>e</p> <p>I want to improve my writing.</p>	<p>a</p> <p>I need to write a letter and ask for information.</p>	<p>c</p> <p>Dear College, I want to improve my writing. Love P. Send informations about your course.</p>
<p>b</p> <p>Dear Sir or Madam i want to improve my writing. Yours faithfully Ms P. Sims <u>Send informations about your course.</u></p>	<p>d</p> <p>Dear Sir or Madam i would like to improve my writing. Please send <u>informations</u> about your course. Yours faithfully Ms P. Sims</p>	<p>f</p> <p>21 Hills Road Southampton SH3 7BD 13 September 2004 Dear Sir or Madam I would like to improve my writing. Please send some information about your course. Yours faithfully Ms P. Sims</p>

20 A Cartoon Adventure

Activity:	describing and reporting events in a fictional narrative
Focus:	time adverbials and phrases to show time sequences
Level:	intermediate
Time:	50-60 minutes
Materials:	copies of a cartoon story
Source:	Hedge, T. <i>Writing</i> , OUP, p. 121-122, worksheet p. 122

In class:

1. point out to your students the conventions of a cartoon story, namely:
 - a. the caption at the top of a picture, which usually says something about the time sequence;
 - b. the bubble with round lines which is a speech bubble;
 - c. the bubble with wavy lines which is a thought bubble;
2. ask students to skim through the story individually in order to get an impression of the time sequence and then ask them to match the following captions with the pictures:

A little while later.....

During the afternoon.....

As the farm came in sight.....

Later, that evening.....

Suddenly, as they followed a bend in the river.....

As evening darkened into night.....

Before going outside to investigate.....
3. tell students to work in pairs, first ask them to check each other's captions and then ask them to make up captions for the last two pictures;
4. the students should now make up the speech for each frame of the story;
5. ask them to decide if the story ends here on a note of suspense, or if they wish to add any more; what endings are possible?
6. discuss the possible endings with the class;
7. ask students individually to write the story, paying attention to the time sequence, and ask them to make up their own titles depending on their choice of ending.

CARTOON STORY

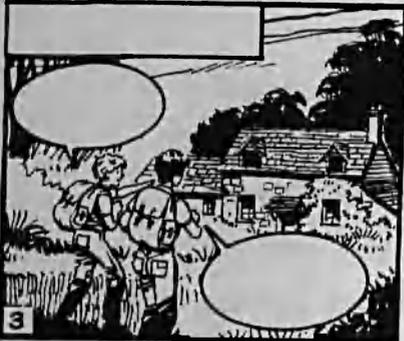
A hot summer morning in the middle of August

Wow! Isn't this great! Two weeks with no one telling us what to do!

Yeah... I hope we find the farm.

TANGLEWOOD FARM WELCOMES CAMPERS

Whew! That's a relief. Look: They do take campers!



NOTE: You may make photocopies of this for classroom use (but please note that copyright law does not normally permit multiple copying of published material).

4 Conclusion

Writing is one of the four skills important for efficient language development. Much attention has been given to the teaching of the remaining skills of reading, listening and speaking whereas writing has been often put aside. Teachers regularly have to follow syllabi where the main focus is set on teaching grammar and vocabulary. Learners themselves tend to avoid any form of extended writing. In my opinion, this is partly because all the writing they have come across so far has had the form of "write a story about.... ." Further assistance or guidance has been hardly ever offered. Exceptions of course appear in the specialised classes of English where students prepare themselves for international exams such as Cambridge exams or TOEFL, etc. However, not all students study English in order to take these exams.

I became aware that I myself rarely paid attention to writing in my own teaching practice. I realised that teaching writing skills is what I would like to know more about and improve in my own teaching.

There were two aims of my diploma thesis: firstly I planned to analyse the role of writing in classes of English as a Foreign Language for adults and young adults from the elementary to intermediate levels, to examine the theory underlying the methodology of teaching writing, different approaches to teaching this skill, the typologies of writing activities, the roles of teachers and evaluating written work. The second aim was to compile a list of twenty writing activities that would add to students' language development. Part of this aim was to try ten of these activities in my own classes so that I can experience them and comment on them in terms of their realisation.

I think that I managed to fulfil the first aim. I examined the methodology underlying the teaching of writing and the most interesting findings are presented in chapter two and its subchapters.

All referred sources agree that teachers should not avoid writing activities in their classrooms. It is advisable that the activities reflect students' real-life needs and teachers prepare them with the focus on a reader in mind. The out-of-class world should not be forgotten. People still write despite the huge increase of new ways of communication. They write for personal or social reasons; for their education or at work. Even the new means of written communication, such as emails,

messenger services or web forums have certain rules to adhere to. Through these means we can attract students' attention and spare them from a boring writing activity.

It is important to adjust the activities for appropriate levels in order not to discourage the students. At the elementary level, students often start with simple copying because, at this stage, they do not have enough language to use for any elaborate work. These activities help reinforce the knowledge learned orally; they also teach spelling and help retain new vocabulary or grammar points. Writing can also serve the purpose of practising communication. Students write simple instructions or short messages they would reproduce orally later.

At the pre-intermediate and intermediate levels, students have expanded their vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. The activities still reinforce orally learned language; however, students can be exposed to a broader range of different texts. At these levels, students can be asked to reproduce different pieces of information through the means of dictation or taking notes. Although dictation is not favoured among many people and teachers, there exist ways to make it more interesting. Communication activities for pre-intermediate and intermediate students should include much real-life tasks to maintain their usefulness in students' everyday lives.

Different approaches to teaching writing have been identified. The widely recognised are product and process approach, genre analysis, and creative writing. Writing is recommended to be carried out as a cooperative activity because it provides each writer with a reader and can be motivating for students as it includes also discussion, research or peer-evaluation.

An important part of the writing process is its evaluation. Many methodologists have considered if it is advisable to correct written work in terms of its form or content. In my opinion, we should definitely do so. However, it is important to employ "a students'-friendly strategy" in order not to discourage them from any positive approach to writing.

It is inevitable to mention other important parts of teaching writing and these are the teachers themselves. They are the students' first audience. They are essential for motivating students, helping them generate ideas and getting started; and after all, they are their evaluators and examiners.

In my opinion, I also managed to pursue the second aim: to compile a list of twenty writing activities. The chapter three (the practical section) includes the compilation of writing activities. However, I did not succeed in trying the ten activities in my classes as I had planned. I managed to carry out only eight of them. The reasons for not meeting this plan lie in the fact that I had to follow the syllabi given by the institutions I teach for.

The activities were tried in the classes presented at the beginning of the practical part of this thesis. They were carried out from September 2006 to March 2007. The tasks are self-contained; they do not relate to one another. All the activities are either collected from different sources, mainly from the works often referred to in this thesis. They range from tasks focused on the formal side of writing (punctuation, reproducing the written information correctly: activities 1-3) to more unguided writing (i.e.: activities 4, 5). Comments on the tested activities are offered after their descriptions.

When collecting the activities, my aim was to propose activities other than those usually presented in textbooks; or to present the textbook activities in slightly different versions.

My students usually welcomed the activities as they differed from the typical content of our lessons. In most cases, I chose such activities that would match the actual needs of the students and the students. During the realisation I came to understanding that the activities should be kept manageable and should not last several lessons. Unfortunately, not all students allowed me to publish their work. In accordance with the above-mentioned methodologists, the tasks ought to be as realistic as possible. The activities need to be included to lessons consistently. It is also highly recommended to recycle the piece of writing for other uses so that the students can see the point of doing them.

I cannot claim that I managed to improve my students' proficiency through the individual tasks. I think I helped them retain and revise certain items of vocabulary or grammar. I showed them different ways of working in lessons of English. In order to reach the improvement, the activities need to be included to lessons consistently.

Practicality, usefulness and ease of orientation were the factors that affected the development of this thesis. Therefore I included the four tables in the text and the blank model worksheets behind the activities descriptions to make the reading of this thesis clearer for the reader.

In the introduction I wrote that I would like to know more about teaching writing and improve it in my own teaching. Throughout the development of this diploma thesis, I have gained much knowledge on the teaching of writing, tried to incorporate it into my own teaching and will by all means continue in including writing activities in my lessons and promoting writing in the classroom. I would also be happy if other teachers would find the selected activities useful and through the activities stop relegating writing to the back burner.

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6 Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Paul’s business trip

Appendix 2 – We’re millionaires!

Appendix 3 – In a cafe

Appendix 4 – Email

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Faint, illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.

VP - [illegible]
C - [illegible]
T - [illegible]
A - [illegible]

WE ARE WIKIOLAPES
IN AUGUST 1999 THREE
FRIENDS FRANK, JACK, GUY
WERE ON HOLIDAYS IN THE
OWN OF VACAQUE IN FRANCE
SUNDAY WHEN THEY WENT
SHOPPING IN THE MARKET AND
THEY SAW A DIRTY OLD FRENCH
FARMER EARLY THEY BOUGHT
2000 FRANKS THEY BOUGHT
2000 FRANKS IN EARLY

^F It was ^P Friday and it was ^A Paul's big business trip to ^H New York in America. he got up at 5 am, got dressed, had a cup of coffee and read the newspaper. At 6 am a taxi arrived to take him to London airport. Paul locked the door and put his bags in the taxi, but he left his briefcase in the house. His business papers, his money, his credit cards, his plane ticket and his passport were all in his briefcase. Luckily, the taxi driver asked Paul if he had his ticket. Paul ran back into the house and got his briefcase, but this time he ran out of the house and left his keys inside.

^{VP} It was ^{VP} Friday and it was ^{VP} Paul's big business trip to ^{VP} New York in ^{VP} America. he got up at 5 am, got dressed, had a cup of coffee and read the newspaper. ^{VP} At 6 am a taxi arrived to take him to London airport. Paul locked the door and put his bags in the taxi, but he left his briefcase in the house. ^{VP} His business papers, his money, his credit cards, his plane ticket and his passport were all in his briefcase. ^{VP} Luckily, the taxi driver asked Paul if he had his ticket. ^{VP} Paul ran back into the house and got his briefcase, but this time he ran out of the house and left his keys inside.

- VP - VECHE PISHENU
- C - ČARNA - -||-
- T - TEČKA - NEBO JSOU NAZNACEM
- A - APOJITSE

WE ARE MILLIONAIRES APP. 2

⁴
IN AUGUST 1999 THREE
FRIENDS FRANK, JACK, GUY
~~WERE~~ ON HOLIDAY IN THE
TOWN OF LARAQUE IN FRANCE.
ON SUNDAY ~~THEY~~ THEY WENT
SHOPPING IN THE MARKET AND
THEY SAW A DIRTY OLD PAINTING
OF ~~THE~~ VIRGIN MARY. THEY bought
IT FOR 1400 FRANKS ^{AND} THEY TOOK ~~IT~~ IT
TO PARIS. IN PARIS, AN EXPERT
SAID ~~THE~~ THAT THE PAINTING WAS
A LIED. AND IT WAS WORTH
5000 OR FRANKS. THE MAN
AT LARAQUE MARKET SAID I WAS
HAPPY TO SELL ~~THE~~ THE PAINTING
BUT NOW I'M ^{AM} VERY ~~UPSET~~ UPSET
DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT IT

2 HE

3 MI HNE

4 HE

Good morning, can I have a
 pot of tea, and chocolate
 chips cookie, please.
 Green tea?

Yes please.

I'm afraid there aren't ^{any} chocolate
 chips cookies.

We have got a brownie.

OK. I would like only green tea.
 It will be £1.35, please.
 Thank you.

~~Thank you~~

I'll have it - vermuel to

GOOD MORNING. CAN I HAVE
 A COKE AND TOMATO & CHEESE
 SANDWICH PLEASE.

LIGHT OR NORMAL?

LIGHT.

I'M AFRAID THERE AREN'T ANY LEFT.

OK NORMAL THEN.

CERTAINLY IS THAT ALL?

YES THANKS.

THAT ~~##~~ WILL BE 1.85, PLEASE

THANK YOU

Dear Miss Petra,

My name is Honza which is typical Czech name. I'm Czech and I live in Pardubice, a city in the Easter Bohemia, but during week I live in Zeleneč near Prague, because I'm working in Prague. I live in Pardubice in a flat with my wife and in Zeleneč I live with my son, his wife and my sweet grandson Jiřík in their new family house. I'm going daily from Zeleneč to work by train, but at weekend I stay in Pardubice.

I and my wife have two children, son and daughter and three grandsons. I'm sixty years old and I'm thirty-eight years married.

I'm already fourteen years working for Imperial Tobacco Company, before Reemtsma International Company as Sales Operation Specialist. I'm like my work, because I use PC and it is interest work.

I'm of medium height, quite thickset. I have brown, gently greying hair and green-blue eyes. I wear glasses. I like grey or blue colours my clothes.

I think I'm a positive person. I'm little introverting, little pedantic, but friendly and neighbourly. I'm orderly and I don't like lazy people.

In my free time I love working in my small garden (near town Chrudim in Easter Bohemia) because it's other kind work than work for my company. In free time I'm reading books, watching TV or playing with my grandsons too. But I don't have much free time now.

I will travel all over the Europe when I retire. I'm learning English language to I can understand to other people on my trips.

Yours faithfully,

Honza

PS:

Very nice spring's weekend and see you on Tuesday!