

Current situations and solutions to improve english writing skills for students majoring in literature at Hai Phong University

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Abstract: *The writing skill is very important in learning English. It helps learners develop their English writing skills as well as help them compare and contrast written language usage in Vietnamese and English. English writing skills are an indispensable part in the process of teaching, learning and using English. The writing presents some effective methods of teaching English writing skills to help students majoring in literature at Hai Phong University learn to write English better.*

Key words: *writing skill, effective methods, learning English*

1. Introduction

When learning English, students practice four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is a difficult skill for learners. It requires teachers to grasp effective teaching methods and learners to have appropriate and effective learning strategies.

At Hai Phong University, teaching and learning English writing skills for non-linguistic students in general and Literature major students in particular still faces many limitations. With many years of experience in teaching, researching, referencing many types of books, and applying many different teaching techniques, we propose some solutions for teaching English writing skills to help students majoring in Literature learn English more effectively.

2. Content

2.1. Current situation in teaching and learning English writing skills for students majoring in Literature at Hai Phong University

2.1.1. Advantages

English is a subject in the bachelor's training program for students majoring in Literature at Hai Phong University with the goal of training students to master listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and vocabulary related to the topics in the program. The knowledge system is arranged scientifically and logically. Diverse exercises help students easily access and apply English in real situations. In addition, a classroom learning environment with good instructors help students expand their vocabulary and improve their writing skills.

2.1.2. Disadvantages

When studying the English section the students encountered some difficulties, especially the writing section. Those are the following:

- Lack of vocabulary: English is a language with a large vocabulary. Learning and knowing the meanings of words is not easy. Furthermore, there are synonyms that are sometimes used in different contexts and interchangeably to avoid repeating words. However, if some words are replaced in the same context, they will change the content of the sentence. Therefore, students often make mistakes in finding the right words suitable for each context in their writing. If students lack vocabulary, they will not know what words they need to use, so they will easily write incorrect sentence structures and make sentences that do not make sense.

- Grammar errors: In learning English, understanding grammar is extremely important. English grammar helps write sentences with correct structure and meaning. If students do not master basic English knowledge, it is easy for them to write sentences that are difficult for readers to understand.

- Expression errors: Most students when writing English do not often have enough vocabulary and language structures to express their ideas. Therefore, they often have to replace words and sentence structures they do not know with what they have learned. This has led to the way of 'writing in circles' to express ideas and as a result the writing is not in line with one's intention, thus easily causing off-topic and confusion.

- Word-by-word translation errors: Students are often easily influenced by their mother tongue, so they often translate Vietnamese words into English. Sometimes this common practice makes the meaning of the writing unclear, causing confusion for readers because some English words, when combined, will have a completely different meaning.

In short, writing may be the most difficult skill because it requires students to spend a lot of time cultivating and practicing. Therefore, teachers are the ones who will help students practice writing regularly. At first, it may just be writing simple sentences, then short paragraphs, and essays, and most importantly, helps students become motivated, love, and feel no longer afraid of writing skills.

2.2. Solution to improve writing skills for students majoring in Literature at Hai Phong University

2.2.1. Preparing to write (Pre - writing)

Pre-writing tasks review and build students' knowledge of relevant vocabulary, relevant grammar points and, most importantly, students' background knowledge, since that is what really generates thoughtful and interesting written work. Pre-writing tasks are a crucial element of successful writing instruction.

In general, the writing often start with an outline, a sample writing or suggested words and phrases. Teachers introduce vocabulary or situations through pictures or reading comprehension activities, students understand how to present a writing according to a certain purpose or requirement. Students will then write according to the requirements set out. teachers should give specific instructions and suggestions for weak and average students and extensive writing with creative freedom for good and excellent students. During the writing preparation step, teachers can offer the following activities:

- "*Guided questions or questionnaire*" activity: Through the writing topic or a sample writing, the teacher asks some suggestive questions related to the topic of the writing to be written to guide students into the main content.

- "*Brainstorming*" activity: The teacher asks students to practice in groups, listing ideas related to the topic being discussed. Then the teacher summarizes ideas on the board or asks representatives of the groups to present.

- "*Ordering*" activity: The teacher gives a sample essay but reverses its order and asks students to

rearrange sentences and paragraphs into the correct order of a paragraph, an essay. From this sample essay, students can draw an outline.

- "*Picture Description*" activity: Teacher lets students observe pictures related to the topic in preparation for writing. Then ask students to describe the content of the picture. Students rely on the content of the picture and suggested words to write a paragraph.

- "*Responding to Texts*": When language learners respond to texts, whether written or oral, they can learn new vocabulary, expressions, grammatical structures, and valuable pragmatic information (e.g., how to structure an e-mail, a movie review, etc.).

- "*Interviews*": Interviews can serve to generate ideas for writing and move learners beyond their own experiences. It usually works best when some of the questions (using the 5 *Ws* and 1 *H*) are unexpected or "hook" students' interests.

2.2.2 - While - writing

Once there is an outline, the teacher lets students start writing. While students write, teachers need to observe and help them do it. Students can discuss with partners or groups. Teachers can also provide students with vocabulary and grammatical structures if necessary. Teachers need to make sure that every student gets to work. When finished writing, students exchange their writing with each other to give suggestions and comments. Some of the activities below will help students understand the lesson and complete the article as required:

- "*Transformation*" activity: The teacher gives students a writing sample. Students read and understand it. Then the teacher asked the students to change some of the information given by the teacher and rewrite the writing.

- Activity "*Question - answer writing*": In this activity, the teacher asks questions related to the topic about to write, students answer the questions. Students then rearrange their answers and use sentence combinations to write a coherent essay.

- "*Writing based on a text*" activity: Students read through a sample writing, use an outline with some changes to write a complete writing similar to the sample one.

- "*Free writing*" activity: Applies a lot to classes with many good students and highly creative students. However, in order for all students to participate well in creative writing activities, teachers must design it

themselves. for more creative exercises. The results of rewriting exercises to be more creative not only help teachers in the process of teaching writing to their students, but also help teachers learn and improve their own skills.

2.2.3. Post-writing

Teachers check students' work in many different ways. Traditionally, teachers collect papers, read them, and then correct mistakes for all students in the class. There are many ways to correct errors, but the best way is to suggest for students to recognize their errors and correct them themselves.

In another way, the teacher calls on students to read their own or their friend's writing (the writing is written in the handout to read or stick on the board). The whole class comments, detects and corrects errors in the writing.

However, at this step, teachers need to provide criteria for evaluating the writings to help students evaluate their own ones. Criteria to pay attention to when editing articles are: Content: Enough, lacking or redundant? Language accuracy: Are words, phrases, and sentences used correctly or incorrectly, appropriately or not? Expression: Clear? Layout? Logic?..

2.2.4. Evaluation activities:

- "Sharing and comparing" activity: Ask two students who are not sitting next to each other to exchange their writing and correct each other's work.

With this activity, students can detect mistakes and correct them, and compare ideas with their friends to enrich their writing. Then the teacher gives additional comments.

- "Exhibition" activity: Students write drafts on a whiteboard or large piece of paper and hang them up in front of the class. Students read the articles aloud to each other, discuss and compare their friends' articles. Teacher comments and supplements.

Finally, the teacher moves students to the step of evaluating the quality of their writing. An effective method of evaluating article quality is to use a list of given evaluation criteria. This list helps students find specific parts of a writing that are effective, such as the topic sentence, supporting details in the article, sentence transitions or conclusions, and linking devices: links. vocabulary, punctuation...

In summary: In the process of teaching English writing, the teacher is always the one who guides, organizes, and evaluates students' writing activities.

By performing tasks at home and in class, students are very active in preparing lessons, creating lessons in class and collaborating with teachers to train their independence, creativity and self-confidence, excited about learning in writing.

3. Conclusion

Due to the specific characteristics of the English subject, developing writing skills is very important for students in general and students majoring in Literature in particular at Hai Phong University. Practicing good writing skills will give students many opportunities to succeed in studying English in particular and in the context of globalized communication in general. Therefore, developing English writing skills for students is very practical to meet the needs of learners and contribute to improving the training quality of Hai Phong University.

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