

REVISIÓN

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Didactic references of the construction of written texts in the course English A1.

Referentes didácticos de la construcción de textos escritos para el curso Inglés A1.

María Helen Tamayo Milanés, Instructor. [mtamayom@udg.co.cu] 
Licenciada en Educación Lengua Inglesa. Máster en Ciencias de la Educación.
Universidad de Granma. Bayamo, Cuba.

Yenier López Barrero, Prof. Auxiliar. [ylopezb@udg.co.cu] 
Licenciado en Educación Lengua Inglesa. Máster en Ciencias de la Educación.
Universidad de Granma. Bayamo, Cuba.

Carlos Manuel Corredera Naranjo, Instructor. [ccorrederan@udg.co.cu] 
Licenciado en Educación Lengua Inglesa.
Universidad de Granma. Bayamo, Cuba.

Abstract

Writing is the oldest way of information; a method which made possible to generate various alphabetic systems not only to establish communication, but also to store and manage information and knowledge. This article reflects a problem in the teaching-learning process of English in Cuban universities referred to the insufficient treatment of the construction of written texts. It aims to carry out a bibliographic review on didactic aspects of the teaching of writing in the English language, mainly in the construction of written texts. The didactic references of this skill as a foreign language are presented. It is concluded that to effectively satisfy this problem requires the use of the communicative approach in the writing process, in order to achieve in students an increase in the degree of communication, organization and linguistic correction in the texts they write and in the actions carried out in this activity within the teaching-learning process.



Resumen

La escritura es el medio de información más antiguo; un método que permitió generar diversos sistemas alfabéticos no sólo para establecer comunicación, sino también para almacenar y administrar información y conocimiento. Este artículo refleja una problemática en el proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje del inglés en las universidades cubanas referido al insuficiente tratamiento de la construcción de textos escritos. El mismo tiene como objetivo realizar una revisión bibliográfica sobre aspectos didácticos de la enseñanza de la escritura en idioma inglés, fundamentalmente en la construcción de textos escritos. Se presentan los referentes didácticos de esta habilidad como lengua extranjera. Se concluye que para satisfacer eficazmente esta problemática se requiere de la utilización del enfoque comunicativo en el proceso de la escritura, con el fin de lograr en los estudiantes un incremento en el grado de comunicación, organización y corrección lingüística en los textos que escriben y en las acciones que realizan en esta actividad dentro del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje.

Keywords: communication; teaching-learning process; writing; construction of written texts.

Palabras claves: comunicación; proceso de enseñanza – aprendizaje; escritura; construcción de textos escritos.

Introduction

Of all the language skills, writing is the most difficult challenge for language teachers because students have less experience with written expression. Stimulated by audio-visual materials throughout their lives, students are novices in the discipline of writing. Making writing an ongoing part of foreign language acquisition from the first day in class will help ensure student success.



Because of the advances in Linguistics and Pedagogy, the didactics of writing understands the process of textual construction taking into account the conceptions of psychology based on the historical-cultural approach developed by Vigotsky (1981), who knew how to get the essence of thought of Marxism classics. He put psychology on the bases that this philosophy contributes as a general conception and as a method.

Students need to be able to write all type of tasks; they have to be aware of the limits between formal and informal style, they have to develop the ability to recognize the audience expectations and requirements. In order to achieve all these, there are issues to be approached, and clarified and here is the moment and the time of the teacher. The learner has to be conducted so as to raise his awareness on the audience, to develop his/her academic writing skills (outlining, summarizing, reporting and arguing, paraphrasing and synthesizing), he needs to be given some theoretical knowledge about writing from which he will later on benefit, he has to become aware of the issues such as the differences between written and spoken language, coherence, among others.

Unfortunately, at almost all levels of the educational process, our system lacks all the above mentioned aspects. There is a kind of inexplicable reluctance and sometimes even fear of approaching writing. And it is maybe just because teachers themselves did not go through such kind of a training themselves. Academic writing is the ultimate goal and challenge of both teachers and learners.

Roméu (2007) explains that from a didactics of the language there has been a transition to a didactics of the speech. In addition, it focuses on the problem of communication, that is, on making students become efficient communicators, capable of understanding and constructing



texts in a coherent way, depending on the communicative needs that are presented to them and in which they will have to interact.

In her research, Roméu (2007) addresses the problem of teaching the construction of texts as a functional component, revealed as a conclusive component (in the comprehension, analysis and construction trilogy). In this sense, the student after discovering the functionality of the discursive structures acquires the concepts and modes of action of science with which it becomes familiar, with the indispensable metalanguage to refer to its codes, elocutive forms, lexical and grammatical means.

According to this, it is necessary to explore, from a conceptual basis, those terms that support and reveal the definition of construction of written texts that is the object of analysis in this research. That is why; it aims to carry out a bibliographic review on didactic aspects of the teaching of writing in the English language, mainly in the construction of written texts.

In this process of construction and transmission of meanings, the unity of thought and language in their noetic and semiotic functions is revealed, and the importance of this process is manifested for the integral development of the individual's personality from the cognitive, metacognitive, affective aspects - emotional, axiological and creative, because of their interaction in the sociocultural context.

Domínguez (2007) refers that textual construction is the self-regulated process of production of meanings for the creation of oral or written discourses that satisfy individual and social needs and interests, they are structured based on experiences and knowledge, habits and abilities; they are adapted to specific contexts and specific receptors, and take into account the linguistic and stylistic variables that shape these discourses, in which the personality and culture of the individual are revealed.



Development

In 1990, The Council of Europe presents to several European countries the new approach for learning foreign languages in the XXI century: the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. More than fifteen countries accept to be in the project, but not Spain. In that analysis, the necessities and motivations are taken into consideration, in relation with the physical, psychic and cognitive profiles of the students, as well as the professors training profiles in order to construct didactic unity with a coherent progression of fundamental cores of learning.

Taking into account the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, to get A1 level, the students can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. They also may introduce him/her and others and may ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Moreover, they can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

In writing activities, the user of the language produces, as an author, a written text, which is read by some readers. In order to get A1, and according to the objectives for a general writing, the students should write simple and isolated phrases and sentences.

Writing is defined by Cassany (1987) as “the contextualized manifestation of human linguistic activity in identifiable and structured units, endowed with intention, genre, polyphony, variation, critical perspective, which expresses the abilities to produce texts. It is claimed that it is the most complex linguistic ability because it requires the instrumental use of the rest of the skills during the production process and the only one that allows a group to cooperate in its construction with varying degrees of participation”.



From the etymological point of view, building refers to compiling or putting in order, in a more precise sense. It consists of expressing in writing the thoughts or knowledge ordered previously. Building well is building the sentence with accuracy, originality, conciseness and clarity. For this, it is necessary to provide the student with sufficient knowledge and a lot of motivation.

Halliday (1982) and Chamot (1993) have defined the text as a semantic unit and coincide in considering as text everything that a person wants to mean, with an intention and purpose, given in a concrete communicative situation.

Roméu (2003) offers a much broader and more complete criterion. For her, a text is a communicative, coherent statement, bearing a meaning that fulfills a certain communicative function (representative, expressive, artistic) in a certain context and that is produced with a certain communicative intention and a marked purpose, which makes it possible to fulfill to certain communicative tasks, for which the sender uses different procedures and also selects the most appropriate linguistic means.

A text is communicative, if it complies with the formal, semantic, logical rules, communicative intention and totality (relationships). For there to be text, there must be communication between sender and receiver, with an intention, that there is totality and all the parts have to be well related. In the act of constructing a text, all levels are interwoven, the semantic or meaning level, the expression or linguistic formality of the meaning and the phonological (voicing or writing). In other words, meaning is linguistically constructed and materialized as oral and written expression.

Domínguez (2007), Roméu (2007) and Cassany (1987) assume consequently the construction of written texts is defined as the functional component through which human linguistic activity is



contextualized in identifiable and structured units. Its dual individual and collective character as a social practice encourages exchange to corroborate ideas, improve them, find the right phrase, tell others what is being built, be criticized, listen to other versions and self-value. Its self-regulation is manifested in the possibility of rereading, reorienting and reconstructing the writing at any moment of the process, from the very conception of the idea to the moment of the final review of the product, which leads to the integral development of the individual's personality. From the cognitive, metacognitive, affective-emotional, axiological and creative aspects.

This process of construction of written texts is currently attended from an approach that Roméu considers integrates three dimensions: cognitive, communicative and sociocultural, which reveal that cognitive and metacognitive processes intervene in the construction of texts and in their understanding, communicative or textualization processes and sociocultural or contextualization processes.

It is also proposed that it constitutes a theoretical construction, the result of the complex process of development of new linguistic and didactic conceptions that focus their attention on the text and on the processes of understanding and production of meanings in different contexts.

Roméu (2009) affirms this cognitive, communicative and sociocultural approach starts from the dialectical-materialist conception about language, defining it as an essential means of cognition and social communication that assumes the conceptions of the historical-cultural school about the thought-language unit and the precedence of instruction. To achieve development, essential foundation to achieve a developer didactics; takes into account the most recent investigations of the linguistics of the text, which take speech as an object and inquire about its structure and functions, and explain its nature as a process of social interaction.



In relation to the construction of written texts, this approach is oriented to the purpose, insofar as it demands to teach why something is written, for whom, under what circumstances, what is the purpose and what consequences could result from such writing. All these elements refer to providing a context for the written textual construction with task-oriented activities that involve an exchange of information and the free use of language. In this sense, it is necessary to bear in mind the developer teaching.

According to the criteria of Castellanos (2009), developer teaching is one that focuses its attention on the scientific direction of the practical, cognitive and evaluative activity of schoolchildren; that promotes cognitive independence and the appropriation of teaching content, through socialization and communication processes; that contributes to the formation of a reflective and creative thought, that allows the student to operate with the essence, establish the nexus, the relationships and apply the content in the social practice; that leads to the personal and social assessment of what is studied, as well as the development of metacognitive strategies and that contributes to the formation of orientation, planning, assessment and control actions, thus fulfilling instructive, educational and developer functions.

Developer learning is one that guarantees the active and creative appropriation of culture in the individual, fostering the development of their constant improvement, their autonomy and self-determination, in close connection with the necessary processes of socialization, commitment and social responsibility.

For Castellanos (2003), learning is a developer when it meets three basic criteria: promoting the integral development of the learner's personality, promoting the progressive transition from dependence to independence and self-regulation, as well as development in the subject of learning. ability to know, control and creatively transform their own person and environment,



and develop the ability to carry out learning throughout life, based on mastering the skills, strategies and motivations to learn to learn, and the need to constant self-education.

To achieve the objective that is proposed with the teaching of the construction of written texts, it is not enough only to develop the skills to analyze and understand texts. Together with the above, it is necessary to put the student in a situation to construct their own texts, in a word, to mean according to the communication needs that they may have with a certain intention and purpose. This also means knowing different codes, since communicative situations are not the same in all cases and using lexical and grammatical means with adjustments to the rules established for each code. It should be specified that in order to achieve better communication it is important to recognize the characteristics of the texts, taking into account the communicative intention that is pursued.

They are classified according to their elocutive form, function and style. The author insists on referring to its elocutive form, since this system aims to develop these types of texts through various situations. Among them are: dialogue, narration, description and exposition. According to Roméu (2008) in dialogue texts they use dialogue as an elocutive form: the conversation and the interview. Two or more people take part in the dialogue, taking turns in the use of the word, and the ideas advance by association. In narrative texts predominate as an elocutive form, although dialogues and narrations may appear inserted. In descriptive texts important details of the reality being described are required, allowing the presentation of objects, people, places and feelings. In expository texts the ideas that the author has on a given topic are presented and explained. Ideas are added without there being an established order or sequentially.

In this sense, Roméu (2008) establishes three levels of cognitive performance through which the student must pass in order to achieve an effective construction of written texts:



Level I (Textual level) referred to the possibility of producing written texts that meet the following requirements: adjustment to the topic and order, unity and clarity of ideas, sufficiency and propriety, coherence and cohesion of the sentences and the text as a whole, delimitation of sentences, paragraphs and segments, thematic progression, use of connectors in function and spelling, cleanliness and readability.

Level II (Pragmatic level) referring to the ability to bond in a specific communication situation. They respond to an intention and to a specific interlocutor, which will imply clarity and adjustment to a specific communicative purpose (argue, convince, explain, order, describe, narrate, etc.); adapt to the chosen register (formal or informal) and adjust to a specific textual typology reproducing its macrostructure.

Level III. (Stylistic level) understood as the ability to produce various figures that help enhance and beautify expression; it implies the use of stylistic resources such as adjectives, similes, metaphors, epithets, among others; according to certain communicative situations and originality in the title of the work and in general.

It must be adjusted to a specific communicative purpose, demonstrating unity and clarity in ideas, coherence and cohesion of the same, organizing them before expressing them in writing. It must reflect correct spelling, cleanliness and readability. To develop writing, the vocabulary related to the experiences and experiences of the students must be used, in order to achieve the presentation of a creative text. In the text construction process, three fundamental moments must be taken into account: preparation, execution and revision.

Preparation

Matches a class or can be extended. In this, the student accumulates data and information about the task. For this, it is convenient for the teacher to explore the knowledge on the subject



and the motivation they have. Starting from the proposition of the topic, we proceed to the exploration of the ideas. For this, you can use a sheet, directly observe reality or any other means that provides information about an aspect that serves as a reference. Through this activity, students:

1. Should express their ideas independently, which contributes to the discovery of the many significant variants of the theme.
2. Should know new words that the teacher introduces from the observation of unknown aspects of reality.
3. Are trained in the development of the skill under study (in this case, the operations necessary to write are orally exercised).
4. Should organize their ideas in relation to the topic and specify the subtopics or topics to be developed, with which the plan for the construction of the written text is formed.
5. Should propose the title.

At this first moment the teacher must select various topics that are in correspondence with the needs of the students (cognitive, volitional, affective, communicative and physiological) and the context in which they develop (time and space). Therefore, it is essential to know in depth the adolescent's personality, motives, interests, interpersonal and family relationships. It is necessary to know the characteristics of each student, how they master what they learn, how they apply it and what they need to improve it. That is why a motivational, practical character and a social significance of the content must be achieved.

For the treatment of written expression, the teacher must be based it on a communicative situation in such a way that writing starts from the realization of activities whose contents are relevant, natural, make sense, are interesting, belong to the person who learns and are socially



useful to understand, analyze and construct texts in different styles. In the same way, the exercises must be planned in a conscious, motivating, scientific and independent way that proposes the student to face new challenges in their learning.

In the structure of the text, it will be emphasized that it consists of three essential phases: how to start, how to develop the idea and how to conclude it. Neither can the specific characteristics of the text to be written and aspects of spelling regulations be lacking.

Execution

The development of this moment does not necessarily have to coincide with the class, because it can be oriented as a task. During this, the student carries out the construction, or what is the same, builds the written text, for which he will take into account:

1. The plan.
2. The specificities of the type of text that it constructs.
3. The observations made by the teacher, regarding the errors that could be made.
4. Self-evaluation of the work that is getting out of their hands and their self-correction, which is expressed in dissatisfaction and constant interest in achieving a higher quality job (functional self-criticism).

At this time, it is important to pay attention to the students by the teacher, taking into account their individual differences (work progress, difficulties they have faced, etc.)

Review

Here we proceed to check the result obtained. It is necessary to verify the quality of the work done by the students, and how the objectives have been achieved. It is important that the teacher spend the time necessary to review the work and point out the successes and errors that will serve as the basis for the students for self-review and self-correction.



- Analysis of the particularities of the work with written expression: in this action the teacher has the possibility of evaluating and then selecting the types of activities aimed at favoring the development of textual construction in accordance with the diagnosis he has.
- Formulation of the objective that defines the purpose of the activity to be carried out.
- Clear and precise reading of the order.
- Explanation of the activity taking into account the levels of help according to the individual differences of the students.

To the extent that the student is able to comply with each of these parameters, the level of independence and assimilation in which he is can be determined. This gives the teacher the idea of towards which areas of knowledge the activity should direct, which although it has implicit attention to individual differences in terms of performance levels, requires a greater intellectual effort from the student, which is defined as the ability of this to carry out creative and investigative activity that is conditioned by a cognitive motive or interest. It is necessary for the student to understand the importance of what he learns and how to use it in his practical life. From this perspective the final phase is framed.

It is relevant to note that in the determination and establishment of different levels of help, both the teacher and the student are trained in correcting errors to move to higher stages of development. As the student acquires expressive maturity, his social relationship improves and his self-esteem is favored. Written constructions are the expression of competence. Individual and group evaluation of this development leads to positive relationships based on critical and self-critical attitudes.



Conclusions

1. The study of the didactic referents that have described the teaching-learning process of the English Course A1 referred to the construction of written texts that there are still deficiencies in the development of textual construction, as well as in the other components that must be taken into account to work on the subject at hand.
2. This study has shown didactic benefits from using writing approach and concerning issues that need to be addressed. In addition, this study has exposed that the writing approach offers students the power to access to the new culture and to integrate it in their own repertoire of skills and strategies.

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