

Edu World 2016
7th International Conference

**TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN DEVELOPING WRITING
SKILLS AND TECHNIQUE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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Abstract

Nowadays, when the role of a knowledge - based society becomes increasingly significant, we face challenges on a variety of levels: cultural, economic, social and educational, as well. The traditional role played by school in society is to offer pupils a genuine useful value system, adaptable to the social and economic background. Pre university- education system undergoes permanent changes and transformations, and the key factor of such changes is the pupil-oriented learning. An important aspect regarding the pupil as the central intellectual capital for new modern didactic approaches is the role teachers and teaching methods help pupils become prepared for the society, for the future, by supporting them both to discover life around them to be sensitive at the same time, and to develop skills and competencies, to shape and outline their personality and character. The goal of this paper is to emphasize the importance and advantages of modern teaching aids for developing skills and techniques in primary school, especially writing skills and techniques. Analysing development of writing skills and techniques as source of innovation and novelty in didactic approach, creates a competitive advantage for further social and cultural development of pupils in the era of knowledge where people must rely on intellect, intuition and creativity. The present paper is an exploratory endeavour based on several sources of information, meant to conceptualize the terms of pupil- oriented learning, writing skills and techniques in primary school, as part of a modern didactic approach built within a redefined learning system.

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Keywords: Primary school education; pupil –oriented learning; writing skills; modern didactic approach.

1. Introduction

Developments in recent years have caused major changes at the level of the political, social, cultural and economic macro-system. The accelerated dynamics of these changes knows implications and goals both at the organizational and procedural level, so the factors meant to compete to the increasing of



responsibility and a sustainable development of an educational model capable of supporting and properly meeting the future requirements and changes can take into account new types of approaches to change, so the directions of change to be aimed at.

2. "Romanian Language and Literature" at Primary Education

The study discipline "Romanian language and literature" provided in school syllabi for primary education is based on a specific curriculum, designed and adapted for the age categories specific for I-IV grades, namely 6-11 years. This corresponds to a modern educational trans-disciplinary model, based on an integrated approach, communicative and functional skills, on creativity.

According to the National Curriculum, in the primary school, it aims to emphasize the skill of oral and written communication, along with the ability of reception of literary and non-literary texts, specific for age features related to I-IV grades, namely 6-11 years.

In the current context, of a knowledge-based, dynamic and competitive society, in which changes in the social, cultural, economic levels resize educational system, they redefine the role of the teacher in primary education and outline the professional training process through re-approaching of functions, skills, responsibilities within the teaching activities, it was also reconsidered the drafting model of the curriculum, which so far involved the division of the subject discipline Romanian language and literature into reading and communication, and it has passed to a more modern, more actual model, i.e. that of approaching the inter-, intra-, pluri-/multi-disciplinary teaching, where the pupil-focusing involves finding those techniques and methods, those teaching strategies and teaching models- studying and assessment, focusing on the pupil, educational needs folded on his/her real life needs. The model and the skill tracked by the new National Curriculum is the communicative and functional one, and the subscribed key-concept is the "lifelong learning" (LLL), which concept refers to the possibility that young people acquire a basic and communicational literary culture, in order to be prepared to deal with all the changes around them, to meet the requirements of the current society, to integrate themselves, to use their resources creatively, to interact with the people around them, to acquire the basis of any possible self-training.

The role of the school in this society where we face a permanent multitude of information is to offer the pupil a fair value system, useful at the same time, in an appropriate context, both economically and socially. In other words, the school is designed to train the future pupil and to invent the future for the pupil.

The goals of the primary education are:

- ensuring elementary education for all children;
- making-up child personality, in compliance with its level and pace of development;
- endowment of children with such knowledge, skills and attitudes stimulating the emotional and creative reporting to the social and natural environment and to allow the continuation of education.

3. The Formation of Written Skill

3.1 Writing- definitions and Features

The written expression skill was defined and described in many different ways, among which:

- according to C. T. Linse, written expression is a "process-result combination: process refers to the act of gathering information and process them until they are organized in an orderly form, understood by all readers and the product is a complex one; pupils should know that written expression is the goal of several steps that make up the process"(Linse, 2005, 98);

- the act of writing is a complex one and does not relate solely to the linguistic competence, but rather the a competence of the person who writes.

- according to C.B. de Miniac, writing is "a means of expression, an activity that mobilizes the individual in its singular and affective dimension; writing means, in a certain way, to say, convey, reveal emotions, feelings, desires or conflicts " (Miniac, 2000, 48);

- any writing is a "structured verbal message", with a well-organized structure, able to conduct interpersonal communication (Parfene, 1980, 24).

For the teacher, formation of written expression competence consists of teaching pupils to produce texts in real communication situations, while, for the pupil, it means to acquire a series of strategies, because writing is not only a language luggage, but it also means reflection, selection and thinking.

Initially, all writing activities were used in schools, especially since it was considered that, in this way, it would contribute to the "training of pupils for life, i.e. to their social integration and to the fulfillment of their personality"(Parfene, 1980, 377).

If traditionally, writing represented a final product, without having to focus on the necessary steps underlying the writing, the only thing to be appreciated being correct writing in terms of grammar and spelling, legible and accurate, modern approach includes, besides grammatical correctness and creativity, their own contribution to that text.

In the current context, written expression related to the "communication skill occurs as an act of production and as a function in the communication act" (Păuș, 2001, 29).

Pamfil (2004) talks about three types of approaches to written expression:

- according to the methodological approach, writing is a very important intellectual activity, through which pupils have access to the major culture forms; this perspective is aimed at forming the basic scriptural skill, through which pupils can speak, represent and interpret the world;

- on the basis of expressive approach, writing is a basic activity in the process of personal development of the pupil; thus, teaching restates its issues, including matters pertaining to the person performing the action; in this new vision, writing is a creative process;

- socializing approach emphasizes another handwriting function, namely the one of instrument of integration and of social success.

Creative and authentic written expression is based on a few principles which, if they are complied with, they will lead to great results:

- written expression approached in terms of communication will focus on interaction; pupils will work in the spirit of a writing workshop, a place to learn, where real or imaginary experiences are shared, which they will build based on their knowledge and the linguistic resources available to them;

- written activities should not be isolated and they must be preceded or followed by other activities: oral communication, reading, understanding of a written or oral message, which, together, should form the context necessary to achieve this task by pupils and generation of ideas; the ensemble of activities aimed at mobilizing and developing linguistic, socio-linguistic, discursive knowledge (of the functioning of texts), referential (of the world) and socio-cultural; they will allow the achievement of pedagogical objectives: functional, linguistic objectives (grammatical and lexical, as well as linguistic register), knowledge related to the operation of the texts, but also those related to cultures and societies;

- to create a written production, acoustic or visual supports are also being used: an excerpt from a movie/cartoon, a picture, a video, a literary text, a series of words or phrases, a song, etc.; through these methods, appeal should be made to all the pupil' senses, giving him/her more chances to explore his/her imaginary;

- the teacher would devote more time to listen to, as well as to read the pupils' texts, he will explain the writing process and will act as a resource person who provides all the necessary indications, being at the disposal of pupils to clarify any uncertainty;

- regardless of the way a written text will be produced, it will always be presented orally (through reading), and, then, it may be displayed on a board, along with other texts in the classroom; in this way, the result of the text composition will be the result of a collective effort, what will motivate the pupils even more; each pupil will contribute to the of the elaboration of texts, will contribute to the project, as far as possible and will be improved through the collective success.

Through writing, the child mobilizes "thinking, imagination, self-control, physical effort and aesthetic commitment. Writing, he/she achieves, in an independent manner, something that would represent him/her." (Ilica, 2003, 187). Written production enables the pupil to express ideas in writing, in a clear, precise and orderly manner; thanks to writing activities, the pupil obtains a better usage of language, organizing, in a better manner, the ideas, thoughts, feelings, before they are communicated and enriching his/her vocabulary.

An accurate oral utterance is required to draw up a written communication. In this respect, the primary school is the proper environment to familiarize and initiate pupils with basic elements of intellectual work and boost their creative capacity.

In the context of a written expression lesson, "the teacher is obliged to strike a balance between the role of the writing process and the importance of the final result. This is essential because the pupils are expecting that, in writing, they focus on either spelling and grammar, or on the message they convey through their knowledge." (Linse, 2005, 98)

In 2007, G. Ferrol și N. Flageul identified the following issues as essential in drafting the written text: "understanding is what is being asked, reflecting prior to communicate something in writing and establishing framing limits for the subject in question" (Ferrol, & Flageul, 2007, 13) . In order to facilitate the process of writing, pupils are offered a few suggestions:

- to understand what they are asked, to rephrase, to sketch out a plan with steps to be followed and ideas to be presented;
- to read and analyse carefully what they have to solve;
- to avoid the rush looking for ideas;
- to write only about the approached topic, without repeating ideas;

- to avoid unfamiliar concepts;
- to select only the basic and useful information that will appear in the actual writing;
- to incorporate all the elements based on a logical and accurate plan.

However, understanding of the problems, searching and organizing ideas are not enough to produce a quality written text, "because a wrong utterance cancels all efforts made or even may prevent communication"(Ferreol, &Flageul, 2007, 46).

3.2 Types of Written Texts for Primary School

Written texts that may be used in the primary school, representing an immediate practical interest can be grouped according to several criteria. The most appropriate such a classification is made by Olga Duțu (1997):

a. According to the elaboration methods:

- oral-written texts-- are used throughout the primary school; initially, pupils prepare the oral text and then they render it in writing;
- collective texts- characterized by a collective activity (participation of all pupils under the guidance of teachers):
 - collectively, the necessary information are collected, title is established, a plan of ideas is organized and composition is prepared;
 - gradually, it is being tracked the increase of the share of individual labour, aimed at the development of the of written communication skill;
 - individual texts-writing activity follows a plan established jointly or individually:
 - in the third grade they use preparatory discussions related to the topic approached, following which the pupils shall determine the plan with the help of the teacher, then, developing each idea, the composition will shape, first orally and then in writing.
 - in fourth grade the pupils work more independently, depending on their skills.

b. According to the method of exposition used:

- narrative texts- approached since the 3rd grade and considered quite easy, whereas pupils are guided according to the literary works; in the case of these texts also appear some difficulties caused by the fact that pupils have no knowledge of literary theory;
- descriptive texts- encountered at all classes, when pupils describe an object/an animal/a character etc.:
 - up to the third grade, all descriptive texts shall be done orally, he switching to their wording in writing starting in the fourth grade.
 - these types of compositions have a great importance for the development of written expression by pupils, which waives with stereotype statements in favour of descriptions of their own language means, being able to express their personal feelings, attitudes, ideas, etc.

The authoress also presents other types of written texts, namely a classification into four categories of compositions that primary pupils elaborates, is based on methods of carrying out the training classes for writing skills:

•First grade – oral compositions (made in writing only with the help of the teacher) on the basis of support material, divided, in their turn, into:

- compositions based on paintings, pictures, video documents, cartoons, comics;
- compositions on the basis of known or unknown texts;
- compositions starting from proverbs, sayings, riddles;
- compositions based on the pupils' own drawings;
- compositions based on the pupils' observations, impressions and imagination, but with the help

of the teacher;

- compositions by analogy;
- compositions based on a given introduction/ ending;
- compositions with support words/sentences;

•Second grade – free compositions;

•Third grade – compositions- correspondence and special purpose;

•Fourth grade – grammar compositions.

Usual written texts for primary education may also be classified according to other criteria, as well as compositions made according to literary texts:

- plan of ideas;
- abstract;
- narration;
 - turning the direct speech into indirect speech and vice versa.

According to the predominating exposition mode, the written texts are:

- narrative;
- description/ portrait type;
- dialogued;
 - complex, including exposition modes.

Communicative model didactics proposes strategies for learning of "active handwriting, also involving playful, non-linguistic tasks, satisfying affective, practical and personal needs of the pupils. There are several strategies for teaching-learning of writing "(Păuș, 2001, 12):

• Location of writing in relation to other learning activities and determination of appropriate contents;

- Setting clear, progressive and projective goals;
- Production of genuine texts;
- Starting from motivating situations;
- Recurrence to playful tasks during learning.

The objective is to teach pupils production techniques in writing, so that, at the end of the learning process, they might be able to produce texts for themselves and for others, not just stopping at mastering the meta-linguistic tools.

The school is designed to help pupils "discover their potential and their school teachers should encourage self-expression, making themselves, sometimes, available even outside the school programme." (Băban, 2001, 185).

Torrance (1962) presents some suggestions which may facilitate creativity in writing activities:

- Rewarding creative behaviour;
- Non-imposing their own solutions to pupils;
- Challenging pupils with unusual ideas;
- Offering open assessments, controversial topics, incitating to problematization;
- Encouraging pupils to write down their own ideas in journals, notebooks, etc.

Creativity lies at the basis of all the writing activities carried out in the classroom or at home. Băban (2001, 185), identified a number of methods to stimulate pupils' creative behavior:

- "Brainstorming: it is based on two basic principles: every pupil is able to produce ideas and quantity develops quality; here are a few requirements: elimination of excessive criticism, encouragement of the free action of imagination, stimulating as many ideas, taking over and development of ideas emanating from their colleagues;

- Synectics (= method of analogies) involves several steps: the teacher presents the topic, pupils restate, in their own words, the task they have to undertake, trying to solve the problem and, finally, they actually write about the topic approached;

- Philips 6-6: pupils are divided into groups, each group having a moderator and a problem to be solved; the debate lasts for a few minutes; ideas are noted and the moderator presents the solutions found;

- Frisco Method: it is based on a directed brainstorming, meaning that each pupil has a role corresponding to a certain feature of his/her personality;

- Method 635 (= brain writing): groups of six pupils are formed, each pupil in the group writes down three proposed solutions for the problem proposed, within five minutes, the sheet is passed on in a clockwise direction and all six sheets pass to each participant in the group, each of them noting 18 ideas." (Băban, 2001, 189 - 190)

3.3 Written Expression - from Traditional Approach to Modern Teaching Strategies

Initially, all writing activities were used in schools, especially since it was considered that, in this way, it would contribute to the "training of pupils for life, their social integration and to the fulfillment of their personality." (Parfene, 1980, 377)

If traditionally, writing represented a final product, without having to focus on the necessary steps that lie at the basis of the writing, the only thing to be assessed being accurate writing in terms of grammar and spelling, legible and neat, modern approach includes, besides grammatical accuracy, creativity and their own contribution to the text.

According to Moiraud (1979), the pupils, ideally, before starting writing, ask themselves the following questions and find out as much as possible, appropriate answers to them:

- What should I write on?
- Who is the self speaking? (pupil/ child / friend)
- Where ? When?

- Why do I write ?
- Who is the addressee? Whom do I write to?

These are some of the basics of writing situation; in other words, the pupil must clarify a few things before getting the information that will be required in respect of drafting any type of text:

- Who is the transmitter?
- To whom it is addressed what I write?
- What is the purpose of my writing?
- What type of text should I produce?
- What knowledge do I have about the subject in question?
- What other information and tools do I need in my wording?

The production of a written text supposes the crossing of several stages, whose number vary, depending on the author. Linse (2005) proposes the following steps:

- Preparing for writing:
 - in the classroom, this phase is reduced to a discussion having the role to clarify the work task, to provide details and examples;
 - it involves an updating of previously acquired knowledge (brainstorming can be resorted to);
 - pupils have the necessary time to think, to gather and organize their ideas;
 - it represents the acquisition of as many information, which will be subsequently the source of inspiration.
- Writing:
 - the focus is on pupils ' ability to write, to transpose their thoughts on paper to note anything related to the subject and ideas will be subsequently rearranged, reworded, completed;
 - matters not related to the subject discussed have to be removed and pupils are free minded that they should not be placed off-topic;
 - practical note: pupils may write each idea separately, so that rearranging of information may be easier.
- Revision:
 - occurs after receiving feedback from the teacher or classmates; children tend to believe that, once they have noted several ideas, they finished writing, waiting for that teacher to accept everything they have performed, or he might be the one who corrects and improve their writing;
 - the true role of the teacher is to give advice, explanations, to teach them how to achieve interesting writings and comprehensible for all;
 - comments must aim, in this way, at the content, not grammar and spelling issues and pupils need to know what ideas and organization they need to keep, but also what should they change;
 - before proposing a writing task, the teacher has the duty to explain exactly what they expect pupils to achieve in writing.
- Editing / correcting:

- pupils must accept that correction is necessary, although they seem useless to work again on a task which they believed it was completed;
- correcting pupils' mistakes and helping to eliminate them represents a difficulty for most of the teachers: on the one hand, teachers should maintain and encourage their enthusiasm to write and, on the other hand, pupils need to be aware that they can't write without complying with the rules of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Presentation:
 - the final version will be rewritten in a more accurate form;
 - focus is put on the result of the other steps, in accordance with the standard conventions of spelling and grammar;
 - it is the ultimate form of writing that can be shared to others;
 - it is the stage arousing the pupils' motivation.

Pamfil (2003), proposes an interesting classification of the types of approach to training/development process and practice of writing:

- Methodical approach:
 - planning: knowledge searching and organizing activities;
 - textualization: linearization of knowledge and proper drafting;
 - review: resumption of writing for improvement and completion of drafting;
 - control: evaluative and reflective process on the whole task, also supposing some comebacks on the writing;
- Expressive approach:
 - free writing: writing without any order of ideas generated by the approached topic;
 - series of rewritings: successive drafts resulting from the review, planning and textualization;
 - correction of final draft and its editing.
- Socializing approach:
 - diversifying of contexts for production of written text;
 - expanding written text typology;
 - centering the writing task on the contents and the consistency of the message;
 - doubling the act of writing through a thoughtful movement;
 - double assessment of writing: as a process and as a product.

4. Conclusions

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the competence of receiving the written message includes several components: a linguistic component, a socio-linguistic component and a pragmatic one. Linguistic competence refers to the knowledge related to the vocabulary, phonology, syntax and other dimensions of the language system. This competence develops throughout the primary education, but more intensely in the first two grades. It is a competence built not only on the basis of the pupil's previous knowledge, but also through the cognitive organization and memory storage of such knowledge or through their accessibility. Cognitive organization and access to any type of

information varies from one pupil to another. This is due to several factors, such as the previous experience as a reader, reading practice or even social environment or education in the family. When learning the phonetic system of a language, knowledge may be conscious and explicable.

The main objectives to be attained in the primary school are that pupils should master the basic skills (such as handwriting, spelling, grammar, and sentence construction); to begin developing the strategic process needed for effective writing (e.g., planning, gathering and organizing information, monitoring, evaluating, revising, and so forth), to assimilate basic knowledge about writing (e.g., knowledge about the characteristics of good writing, needs of audiences, and so forth), to learn using electronic tools for composition (e.g., word processing and publishing tools), to begin growing fond of/developing writing and to use writing for various purposes (e.g. communicate, inform, entertain, persuade, reflect and so forth).

The objective of developing the competence of reception of the written message to the primary education pupils can be achieved, if the manners in which the vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and spelling of a language are assimilated as efficiently as possible.

The amount, extent and mastery of vocabulary are the fundamental parameters in acquiring the capacity of reception of the written message. To streamline this process, it is necessary that reading be attractive, not boring at all, involving actively the pupil in any activity related to the text.

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