The Process Writing Approach: Integrating Padlet and Web 2.0 Tools in the ELT Writing Classroom

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Abstract

In the ELT classroom, the writing lesson is mostly regarded as a static, strict and solitary activity. On the other hand, out of the classroom, in the digital era, writing is active and interactive as it symbolizes free and critical thinking. In this article, an original writing lesson is synthesized underlining the power and the effectiveness of innovation in the writing class, through the integration of technology. The process writing approach is the basis for a lesson full of polyphony, autonomy and responsibility, enriching learners' 21st-century skills. Simultaneously, Padlet (an online interactive tool) and current web 2.0 tools interweave this writing lesson and bring collaboration and multiple interpretations in a class where anxiety and stress are lessened.

Keywords: Process Writing Approach, Padlet, Web 2.0 Tools, ELT Class, Integration of Technology

Introduction

In a contemporary digital era, writing is powerful as it is interrelated to communication and free expression. Lytton Stranchey (1938) underlines that "writing ought to be like running through a field" presenting the writing process as an activity of motivation, spontaneity, natural continuity and freedom. However, in the ELT classroom the writing lesson is mainly illustrated as a monotonous, silent and restricted procedure.

This article aims to show the effectiveness of process writing in the ELT classroom, which if integrated with technology and current web 2.0 tools, will create a fruitful base for interaction, cooperation and free expression. In this light, an original writing lesson, which requires two teaching hours off 45 minutes each, is synthesized, described and justified, the web 2.0 tools used are evaluated according to specific criteria while some further thoughts and assumptions are presented after the implementation of this approach.

More specifically, this writing lesson is especially designed for a monolingual ELT class which consists of teenage students who are 'Independent Users' since their level is B1 (Threshold) according to the Common European Framework (2001) and they are either good or advanced users of technology. Importantly, a portable computer and an interactive board are used, while the students should bring their mobile phones or their tablets in class in order to experience the effectiveness of technology and interact with their peers.

The Writing Context

Writing is defined as a complex activity which requires not only the production and generation of ideas (Richards &Renandya, 2002) but also cognitive and metacognitive skills (Grahan&Perin, 2007). Delving into the Greek writing context, recent surveys have underlined the pivotal role of examinations and foreign language certificates in the ELT learning (Rothoni, 2019) as they delineate learners' successful future life and career (Alexiou & Mattheoudakis, 2013). Importantly, these perspectives influence the teaching of writing; the learners are forced to imitate a model text (as provided by the majority of the course books), granted that knowledge is acquired through mimicry (Pincas, 1962) while the perfection of the final writing product is prioritized focusing on language rules and forms (Hyland, 2016). Consequently, the writing process becomes a static and solitary activity while real-life contexts and writer's uniqueness and personal perception are avoided (ibid). In this sense, the creation of an innovative learning environment full of creativity, multiple interpretations and collaboration is impeded resulting in lack of inspiration and motivation.

On the other hand, out of the ELT classroom, the role of writing is completely different, while the web 2.0 tools have reformed our perspectives towards the access, the construction, the communication and the acquisition of knowledge (Ware et al., 2016). Simultaneously, the needs and the fast pace of the contemporary society require learners well-prepared and armed with the 21st skills. Naming some of the latter, the main focus is on the digital skills, communication, collaboration, critical and creative thinking, problem-solving and empathy while young people, shaped and grown in this digital era, are regarded as 'digital natives' (Prensky, 2001, p.1).

Focusing on the learners, they are attracted by technology which plays a vital role in their everyday life. Mostly, they appeared as members of social and interactive digital communities like Instagram or facebook where they can act, react, communicate and gain information. Regarding their writing skills, writing is their means to communicate, express their emotions and opinion, judge and evaluate by writing comments, public or personal messages or titles for their posts. Moreover, writing is their way to search for information through search engines or to keep personal notes through reminder applications or digital notepads. Regarding their communicative skills, they upload or share videos or texts based on their personal life and thinking since sharing is a way of interaction that links them with a real, lively and interactive audience. Simultaneously, as regards collaboration, they may cooperate to create original pieces of art like poems, songs, pictures or videos, sharing the excitement of togetherness. Additionally, the technological tools provide a sense of control and autonomy, enabling them to access, synthesize and

filter information and knowledge. However, learners seem unable to connect their real-life literacy activities (digital or not) with language learning (Zheng et al., 2017) due to the traditional model of the literacy classroom.

Remarkably, the benefits and the effectiveness of a more communicative, collaborative and innovative learning environment, in the ELT classroom, are depicted by various learning theories. According to Piaget (1951/1946), learning is gained through action and creative thinking, while for Vygotsky (1962), this is achieved by social interaction and the guidance of a more capable or advanced model (parent, teacher, peers), known as 'scaffolding'. Simultaneously, the integration of technology would enrich further this beneficial environment, bringing interest and motivation and providing the authenticity and spontaneity of real-life contexts (Davis et al. 1997) through the interaction with a real audience (Zheng et al., 2017) in a classroom full of opportunities and polyphony. In this vein and based on the theory of connectivism (Siemens, 2005), the others are the source of knowledge, experience and information (ibid) and importantly, in a world of rapid change, this can be achieved through the powerful and connected-structured world-wide computer network.

Synthesizing the Lesson: The Process Writing

Focusing on the current writing context and the needs of the learners, the synthesis of a more productive, collaborative and inspiring writing lesson is indispensable. Delving into process writing, this approach is defined as a "non-linear exploratory and generative process" (Zamel, 1983, p. 165), setting the basis for a learning experience based on the discovery of learning, knowledge (Raimes, 2002) and inner world. Seow (2002, p. 316) thoroughly illustrates it in four basic phases: "planning, drafting, revising and editing" while through this path, there is the opportunity of a back and worth notion following a recursive procedure. In this non-linear movement, the ideas are freely expressed, enriched, developed, shared and reconsidered while the main emphasis is given on meaning and fluency as accuracy is deprioritized. In this vein, activities based on open discussions and brainstorming are encouraged while model texts and guided tasks are avoided. Consequently, a creative environment of multiple interpretations, various voices is shaped, impeding the stress of correctness and the fear of perfection. In this approach, the focus is on the process rather than on the flawless final product.

Furthermore, the role of collaboration and communication is underlined, as group and pair-work activities are promoted. Moreover, peer-assisted writing (Grahan&Perin, 2007), which allows the students to create cooperatively drafts, plans, notes, and peer-feedback, according to which the learners evaluate each

other's performance and share their knowledge and comments, are important parts of this approach. All these features fill the ELT class with respect, acceptance, security and warmth, building the most appropriate basis for a fruitful lesson full of motivation, inspiration, cooperation and freedom. Thus, this would be the most appropriate approach not only for the needs of these learners but also for a creative writing class.

Last but not least, considering the immense contribution of technology to learners' improvement, it is undeniable that without the integration of technology, the lesson cannot be taught powerful, effective and thought-provoking. In this light, a writing lesson based on process-orientation integrating technology has been synthesized.

Selecting Teaching Tools and Materials

Importantly, various technological tools and materials are used, imbuing the lesson with motivation and purpose. Particularly, web 2.0 tools, known also as participatory or social (Blank & Reisdorf, 2012), are online software programmes which offer various tools for myriads of purposes, including education. According to Peachey (2019), they provide socialization and collaboration, encouraging the learners not only to connect with the others by sharing information, but also to create bonds and communities and enrich their language and communicative skills. Moreover, students can be the constructors of original products received by a real audience improving their motivation, creativity and inspiration (ibid). Considering these and focusing on the objectives of the lesson, a variety of web 2.0 tools is used.

Importantly, the main basis of this lesson is Padlet, which is a simple platform with free access. A virtual wall is presented imitating a notification board, where important notes, pictures and announcements can be found and are approachable for all the community. In this vein, the creator of this wall can pin various files (videos, audio, photos, documents) and share them with others, while every member can comment under the shared information. For the learners, this tool resembles the known social media (facebook, Instagram) and provides interest, collaboration and interaction in a purposeful and well-organized basis of activities.

Google Docs is another important tool for this lesson. Granted that it serves the needs of collaborative writing according to which knowledge is shared between the peers increasing writing skills (Swain &Lapkin, 2001), this tool has been selected. Simultaneously, this is appropriate for process writing stages based on planning, drafting, redrafting and exchanging while it is fast, direct and user-friendly.

Additionally, another beneficial tool is Peergrade (https://app.peergrade.io), which is a free-accessed platform where students upload their writing products and they evaluate their peer's performance following specific criteria provided by the teacher. Through this, they can develop their literacy skills, as they are both readers and writers, while they create connections between them, the input and their classmates. Moreover, they provide and receive useful feedback in order to improve their skills and support the others. In this vein, the learners not only improve their literacy skills but also become active participants and responsible for their own learning in a learning environment of giving and support. In this sense, polyphony and multiple voices are encouraged as everybody benefits from each other's opinion and knowledge.

In addition, a video through the YouTube (a popular video source) is presented, providing an audiovisual input (Allan, 1985) which not only engages the learners in a purposeful activity through the exposure to authentic language, but also facilitates language skills, in an entertaining way (ibid). Consequently, this is considered as an effective language teaching aid (Stempleski et. al, 1990). Delving into the lesson, the particular video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PwNW7PAUzQ) is selected according to Arcario's criteria (1992) in terms of interest and motivation, exploitability and clarity of the message conveyed, length and language level and content.

Moreover, among the plethora of the web 2.0 sites and the information provided, a particular reading text (https://www.topuniversities.com/blog/top-5-challenges-studying-abroad) has been meticulously selected. This online article was chosen based on particular criteria regarding its suitability. First, it is in accordance with learners' interests, age and known world (Arias, 2007), motivating them to be involved and interact through it with their peers (Noortyani, 2018), while it is exploitable (Nuttall, 1982) as it facilitates learning and it enriches strategies and skills. Moreover, it has been checked in terms of its readability (Arias, 2007) based on the appropriacy of language and syntax (using online readability tools). Simultaneously, Krashen' input hypothesis, known as "i+1" (1982), has been considered, providing an input slightly above learners' competence in order to increase their interest and their language knowledge. Additionally, its authenticity would benefit the learners exposing them to real-life language and situations and expanding their vocabulary and grammar (ibid). Furthermore, it is attractively and clearly presented, empowering learners' schemata and encouraging them for further interpretations and critical thinking.

Furthermore, email has been also applied facilitating the communication and interaction between the teacher and the learners. This widely-known tool of communication is direct, rapid, easy, cheap but priceless, offering the opportunity to send files, images and messages. Moreover, it provides the learners

with the opportunity to enjoy writing and understand its importance, involving the learners in a lifelong activity where they can improve their digital and writing skills.

Although it is not a web 2.0 tool, the word processor is also applied in this lesson as it is a user-friendly, accessible and known technological tool for the learners. According to Piper (1987), its usage provides myriads of outcomes regarding writing learning. Granted its easiness and simplicity, it offers many features and options as regards textual structure and presentation while it is attractive and formal-looking preparing the learners for their future career life and needs. Moreover, it serves all the actions needed in order to implement process writing as the learner can draft, delete, change, re-edit, save or send his work safely and simply. Furthermore, through this tool, the active, productive and constructive writer's profile is been underlined, meeting one of the most important objectives of this lesson.

Last but not least, it should be underlined that the websites and tools were vigilantly selected; they are user-friendly, fun and fast (Kelly, 2000), respecting the users' privacy and safety. Moreover, they are up-dated, accessible and free as well as they are appropriate for young users. Last but not least, albeit the simple and attractive layout, there are neither distractive images nor advertisements.

The Writing Lesson: Description and Justification

First and foremost, the objectives and priorities of this lesson should be described. It has to be clarified that the main focus of this lesson is neither on the perfection of the final writing product nor on a specific writing genre, but on the attempt to encourage my learners to be involved in the writing process creatively, constructively and collaboratively, expressing themselves openly and freely and expanding their mental horizons by obtaining and practicing learning strategies and skills. In this vein, they would be active and critical thinkers as well as autonomous and independent learners, appreciating the usage and contribution of technology to their learning in and out of the ELT classroom. Hence, a genre to which they have already been exposed is chosen as an encouraging, safe and fruitful base for this technology-based lesson. Moreover, a topic about studying abroad, which is both controversial and real-life issue, would be the spark for polyphony and motivation in class.

Delving into this lesson, the students bring either their tablets or mobile phones in class, so as to be practically and creatively involved in the implementation of technology while the interactive board is in front of them, encouraging individual and collaborative learning respectively.

Pre-Writing Stage

Initially, Padlet wall (https://padlet.com/stacybz/Bookmarks) is shown through the interactive board and pictures about universities are presented, activating learners' background knowledge and content schemata.
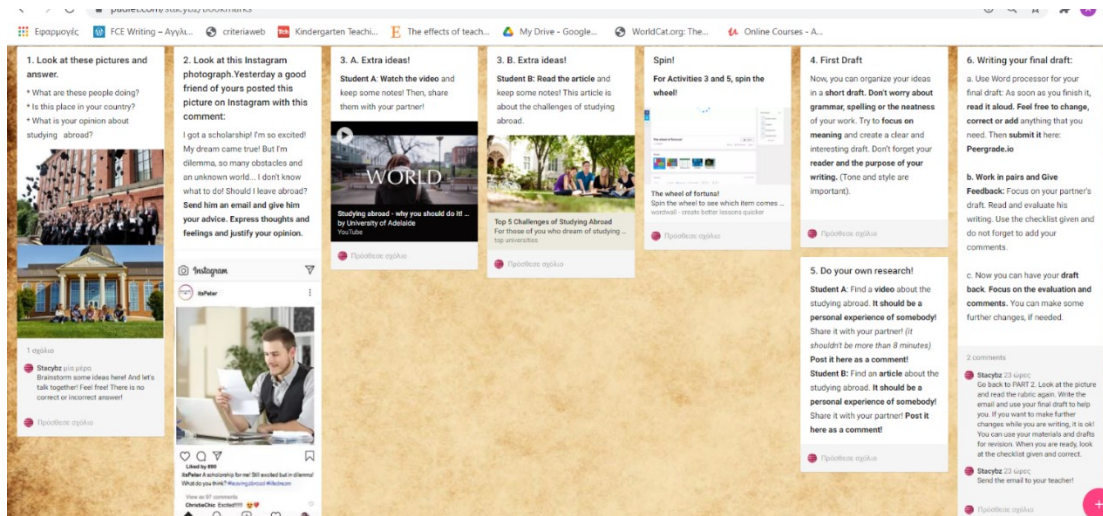
Picture: The Padlet wall

Triggered by the questions provided, a free discussion between the learners is encouraged, while the teacher is a facilitator of this connection. The first questions require brainstorming which should be limitless, free and non-judgmental to promote critical thinking and variety of opinions (White & Arndt, 1991) through collaboration. The last question is more personalized, emphasizing personal thoughts and feelings. Simultaneously, the learners can comment on the pictures using their tablets, participating in a real-life activity and practicing their writing skills. Then, the main topic appears and the learners are exposed to an authentic and familiar visual item (an Instagram picture) interwoven with their free-time activities and personal life (Henry et al., 2017), triggering their interest and making the task memorable and purposeful. Having read the comment of the picture, they are involved in quick writing, noting their first thoughts down but ignoring spelling or other minor errors and focusing on the message conveyed, since spontaneity, editing and creative thinking are prioritized(Jacob, 1986). Importantly, this is a problem-solving activity which requires empathy and critical thinking. The learners are exposed to a real-life scenario, practicing cognitive and metacognitive strategies and cultivating 21st-century skills, sharing a common goal and preparing skills and strategies necessary for their present and future.

For this activity, Google Docs is used and the teacher may model this activity, if needed. Since some learners usually complain about the lack of inspiration and considering that their notes would be limited and halted, some extra help is required. Moving to exercise 3, the students have to work in pairs and each

of them has to be exposed either to a video or to an article gaining further ideas. Significantly, the learner is considered as an active and critical viewer as he watches with purpose, focusing on meaning and getting involved. Simultaneously, in this line, the text triggers critical thinking, problem-solving promoting interaction with peers (Warshauer, 1997).

A spinning wheel (https://wordwall.net/resource/9260450/wheel-fortuna) shows their task, bringing excitement and fun and mitigating stress. This is a collaborative task, since the learners should negotiate for meaning, achieving further comprehension through interaction (Long, 1996) and multiple interpretations. Each student knows about a specific aspect of studying abroad either the advantages or the drawbacks. Consequently, there is an information gap and they have to share their knowledge, enriching their notes and cultivating not only their collaboration but also their autonomy as they are responsible for their learning. Having finished the task, the learners compare and contrast their perspectives while they are free to rearrange or flourish their notes as they work collaboratively. Thus, this activity promotes cooperation, creativity and scaffolding while the integration of Google Docs facilitates this interaction.

Drafting Stage: The First Draft

Granted that the ideas are collected, the process of drafting follows in a stage where fluency and the importance of the reader/audience are prioritized (Seow, 2002). Consequently, the writers should focus on their writing style, tone and target, building a connection between their audience (Hyland, 2016), in a rather authentic, communicative and active process.

Revising Stage: The Second Draft

Once the first draft is finished, the learners should design their second draft, however, in this activity they are even more active as constructors and re-constructors of their knowledge. They are encouraged to search either for videos or for a reading passage (the selection depends on the spinning wheel) about real readers' personal experiences towards studying abroad. This is an activity based on critical thinking, problem-solving and authenticity as the input would be the "voice" of a real person, strengthening the learners' autonomy and metacognition while polyphony is emphasized. The learners share their findings (through Padlet) and they enrich their first draft with new information, going back to their first draft (Google Docs) in a non-linear notion and working in pairs. They read the second draft aloud and they correct it so as to make it understandable and meaningful for the audience/ peer which is real, practicing metacognition and gaining autonomy. After that, they recopy it using the word processor and they upload

it to Peergrade (https://app.peergrade.io). By using this platform, they exchange and evaluate each other's work and provide feedback. Importantly, feedback is essential as not only it offers comments and necessary information but also it reinforces revision (Shing, 2002). In this case peer- feedback is direct and immediate through the assistance of technology while the readers and writers are real, creating and participating in an authentic dialogue through writing (ibid). Consequently, their writing skills are improved (Rollinson, 2005). In this sense, through the evaluation of the other, self-evaluation is achieved with metacognition. Thus, peer feedback benefits the learners multi-sidedly while it appears more efficient compared to feedback provided by the teacher (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). Importantly, peer-feedback criteria are given by the teacher through the platform, facilitating self and peer-evaluation.

Editing Stage: The Final Product

Having received their peer-evaluation and feedback, the learners build their final product, considering their peer's and personal conclusions. When they are ready, they send the final writing product to their teacher via e-mail. This web 2.0 tool would facilitate the connection between teacher and learner and create a deeper and warmer relationship while the feedback is fast, direct and personal. Moreover, writing skills are improved in a stressless and friendly environment where the learner is more independent and confident to express his thoughts in private. For homework, the learners can create an online poster (www.designcap.com) encouraging their classmates to study in or out of the country, consolidating the knowledge gained and integrating art, creativity and imagination. Alternatively, they can conduct a survey (www.typeform.com/) about this issue and present the findings in class.

The Writing Lesson: Implementation and Evaluation

Admittedly, the process writing can be seen as an innovative and alternative approach both for teachers and students while the contribution of technology in class brings inspiration, positivity and participation. Since accuracy and proper language are not prioritized, the learners are invited to let evaluation and assessment behind and participate in a procedure where the errors are embraced as they are valuable for their improvement. Simultaneously, authentic materials and collaboration between the learners shaped a lesson full of chances for multiple interpretations and critical thinking while technology is used naturally and creatively. In addition, this lesson has another positive perspective as well; the teacher has the opportunity to re-introduce himself since he is neither the controller nor the evaluator, but the facilitator who supports his learners and gives them room to express themselves and blossom. Consequently, the

students feel more responsible, independent and autonomous as they made their own decisions with no manipulation or stress.

On the other hand, this approach has not gone unchallenged, since its implementation requires a lot of study, preparation and practice while the integration of technology may be demanding and time-consuming for the teacher. Meanwhile, its non-linear process would seem chaotic for those teachers who always want to go by the book and follow a linear, safe path. However, the uniqueness of this approach lies in this messy, chaotic, unexpected, back and forward notion which not only portrays the exact process of writing but also resembles the challenging path of teaching and learning. Not surprisingly, through this exposure and revision of the same activities, the students have the opportunity to scrutinize deeper in their writing skills or even soul and feel proud because they always find a new piece to collect, proving that this approach is fruitful and even more effective through the integration of web 2.0 tools.

Conclusion

The teaching arena is full of opportunities, challenges and experiences for both teachers and learners. Since technology and the needs of the contemporary society have reshaped the way we perceive and use language and writing skills, the teacher should be vigilant and innovative to bring change in class, while technology is the perfect tool to achieve this. In light of this, every teaching path provides us with a lesson to learn and reminds us that we do not struggle for the perfect destination but for an inspiring and memorable journey of teaching and learning.

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