On a journey towards a writing habit: a material package for upper secondary school

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Kirjoittaminen on yksi kielitaidon neljästä osa-alueesta puhumisen, kuuntelun ja lukemisen lisäksi. Se on myös osa-alue, jossa monilla oppilailla ilmenee vaikeuksia. Kirjoittamisen opetuksessa on pitkään keskitytty sen tuotokseen, valmiiseen tekstiin, eikä siihen, mitä tapahtuu tyhjän paperin ja viimeistellyn lopputuloksen välissä. Tämän materiaalipaketin tarkoitus on kiinnittää huomio siihen, kuinka oppilasta voidaan tukea kirjoitusprosessin aikana ja kuinka kirjoittamistaitoa voidaan kehittää harjoittamalla kirjoittamisen eri vaiheisiin liitettäviä taitoja.

Materiaalipaketissa noudatetaan prosessikirjoittamisen ideaa, jossa itse kirjoittamista edeltää huolellinen valmistelu, suunnittelu ja ideointi. Prosessikirjoittamista tuetaan paketissa genrepohjaisella lähestymisellä, jossa painotetaan eri tekstilajeille tyypillistä kielenkäyttöä sekä kirjallisia konventioita. Genreiksi on valittu lukioikäisillekin ajankohtainen työhakemus, sekä oman mielipiteen ilmaiseminen ja tukeminen argumentoivassa tekstissä. Näiden lisäksi tehtävissä pohditaan, miten saada aikaan mahdollisimman sujuva ja hyvin organisoitu lopputulos. Tavoitteena on tarjota oppilaille kirjoittamiseen sellaisia työkaluja, joita he voivat hyödyntää myöhemmissä kirjoitustehtävissään.

Materiaalipaketti on suunniteltu toteutettavaksi lukiossa valinnaisena kurssina ja kohdistettu sellaisille oppilaille, joilla vieraalla kielellä kirjoittaminen, tai kirjoittaminen yleensäkin, takkuaa. Tehtävät ohjaavat oppilasta etsimään avainsanoja, kokoamaan ideoita ja järjestelemään sisältöä ennen itse kirjoittamista. Pakettiin kuuluu myös olennaisesti oman ja muiden tekstien arviointi, sekä erikseen sisältöön ja tekstin ulkoisiin seikkoihin kohdistuva muokkaaminen. Paketti koostuu kolmesta osa-alueesta: ensimmäisessä osiossa keskitytään lämmittelytehtäviin, jotka johdattelevat keskittymään niihin erilaisiin tekijöihin, jotka vaikuttavat kirjoitusprosessin taustalla. Toisessa osiossa kirjoitetaan vaihe vaiheelta vapaamuotoinen työhakemus, kolmannessa taas kasataan mielipideteksti. Tehtävien tavoitteena on saada oppilaat näkemään kirjoittaminen prosessina, jonka eri vaiheisiin voidaan paneutua ja näin parantaa kirjoitustaitoa esimerkiksi huomaamalla, missä kohtaa oma tekstintuottaminen hankaloituu.

Asiasanat – Keywords EFL teaching, genre-based writing, process writing, writing, difficulties in writing
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX
Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1 INTRODUCTION

The ability to write coherently is an important part of language proficiency (Gaudiani 1981: 43) and has always been one of the four skills included in the syllabus for teaching English (Harmer 2014: 31). Nowadays we are most often evaluated by our control of writing (Hyland 2002: 2), both in professional contexts, such as entrance exams, and in social situations, such as the social media. Almost everything we write reveals something about us, which makes writing a central part of our social output (Hyland 2009: 70).

Considering the importance of writing in our social contexts, it is most important to ensure that students struggling with foreign language writing, and writing in general, are offered effective tools for developing this area of their language proficiency. Materials in this area have a tendency to focus on the final written product and not on the process which takes place in between an empty paper and a finalized text. The aim of this material package is to turn that attention to the possible ways of supporting a student during the process of writing and to the process of developing a writing habit through practice.

After considering the possible difficulties students might encounter in writing, whether writing in their L1 or in a foreign language, a combination of process-based and genre-based teaching of writing is suggested as a means of developing the writing ability, building an active writing habit and creating a view of oneself as a competent writer. The aim of this material package is to approach writing by choosing a genre and learning to construct it through process writing, or point-by-point writing. A focus on the writing process itself allows students to steer away from the pressure of "not being a good writer" by seeing the different subprocesses of writing as independent parts which can be improved by practice. A focus on genre, on the other hand, encourages students to see the way texts convey meanings and learn how to exploit them for their own writing needs.

I begin by discussing the concept of a writing ability and the possible problems a writer might encounter during the process of writing. The overall theme of chapter two is the journey towards a writing ability, i.e. different aspects of writing which can affect the writing process. Chapter three explores difficulties in foreign language writing in more detail, while chapters four and five introduce process-based teaching and genre-based teaching as possible solutions for these difficulties and for overcoming the problems in the area of writing in general. Chapter six presents the framework of the material package and, as a conclusion, chapter seven discusses its strengths and weaknesses.

Before introducing the two approaches to writing, then, I present an overview of writing as a skill and its challenges for a language student. The decisions a teacher makes in the classroom are always affected by his/her beliefs (Hyland 2003: 1), which is why it is important to start with a description of writing in general and of the writing ability, or in other words, what it means to be a good writer.

2 BUILDING A WRITING HABIT

"The one general principle that should always be adhered to is that writing has to be taught. It does not grow inevitably out of extensive reading and free writing" (Pincas 1982: 24)

Before the emergence of process approaches to writing teaching, different text types (or genres) were rarely taught - they were assigned (Rief 2006: 32-39). Students were given a task in the form of an order, such as "write a letter of complaint". The newfound interest in the individuality of writers and their writing processes has allowed researchers to seclude different subprocesses from the writing process and to detect possible areas of difficulty. While specified problems in writing in a foreign language are examined in section two, White and Arndt (1991: 3) remark that even though native language writers have more language resources, they encounter similar problems as foreign language writers. Thus, the following chapter discusses the writing ability, the journey towards that ability, and the possible problems that may occur, whether writing in one's L1 or L2.

2.1. What makes a good writer? The writing ability

At which point can one consider themselves a "good writer"? To begin with, both first- and second-language researchers have found the term difficult, if not impossible, to define. Writing is used in different situations, by different people and for different purposes and thus the writing process cannot be covered by a single definition (Weigle 2002: 3). The abilities of a good writer are thus almost equally difficult to list and to mimic for one's own purposes.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 240) make an attempt at such a list and suggest that a good writer plans more, reviews their plans, considers the reader's point of view,

and has a range of writing strategies. Many researches have made similar lists, but rarely offer actual evidence on the effect of these abilities on writing, which is often due to the complexity of studying the writing process. After all, the process is highly individual (Rief 2006: 32-39) and writing strategies are thus not easy to examine: these tend to be situations where students are required to verbalize their mental processes, which can be both conscious and unconscious and hard to recognize all in all (Hyland 2009: 23). The majority of these abilities listed by Grabe and Kaplan - planning, reviewing and exploiting writing strategies - align with the core ideas of process writing, introduced in chapter three.

One way of determining whether a given text is good is indeed to examine the effect it has on its readers, the extent to which a writer has been able to consider the reader's point of view. According to Hyland (2009: 11), "communication, and not accuracy, is the purpose of writing". He considers factors such as grammatical accuracy and syntactic complexity to be of minimal effect on being a good writer – instead, one should know how to make use of these for different communicational purposes (Hyland 2009: 11). He reminds us that writing is not to be looked at as a separate, abstract skill, but rather a social practice (Hyland 2009: 48). In accordance with this, Krashen (1984: 17) notes that good writers focus on content in revision, while poor writers tend to form. These views are connected to genres, which are discussed in chapter five.

Perhaps one of the best known models of the writing ability is Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) discussion on knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming, the latter referring to actively reworking through one's thoughts. By their definition, knowledge-transforming is a process of thoughts emerging from the writing process itself - in other words, rethinking one's initial ideas leads to them developing into a coherent text (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987: 10). The process of knowledge-transforming is a way of ensuring that the final draft of a

text reflects the writer's latest thoughts on the subject (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987: 11), meaning that their initial thoughts have been actively processed and developed, and not just "told" as in knowledge-telling. As for the abilities of a good writer, a knowledge-transformer, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987: 58) list the skills of generating text without a respondent, actively searching for content, shifting to whole-text planning instead of focusing on local points, and learning to "go beyond the text as written". By this they mean, of course, revision.

In contrast to good writers, Westwood (2008: 59) lists motivation and anxiety problems and avoiding the writing task as common problems amongst poor writers. He encourages teachers to restore the interest in writing by, for example, using genuinely interesting topics and themes. According to him, it is most important to make the writing tasks seem achievable, i.e. to make them short and simple at first and to use warm-up tasks. He, too, continues on the importance of planning, editing and going beyond the mechanical aspects of writing (Westwood 2008: 60).

Krashen (1984) also discusses the differences between good and poor writers. In his opinion, the main difference can be found in the actual composing processes: he concludes that good writers have mastered the processes for getting ideas down on paper (Krashen 1984: 12) and thus rarely come across a writer's block or the empty paper syndrome. His list includes a good writer planning more, pausing more during writing to re-read, revising more and not using a linear writing process (Krashen 1984: 14), which makes it quite similar to other lists in this area. However, he underlines that the most dangerous thought for poor writers is the illusion of good writers possessing a magical ability, which allows them to just write without any interruptions or setbacks (Krashen 1984: 33). This thought almost always leads to an assumption that writing cannot be taught or learnt, but can only be possessed as an inner ability.

To conclude, Hyland (2004: 9) notes that the writing ability is not a set of "abstract cognitive or technical abilities" and thus, in theory, one cannot possess an abstract writing ability. Rather, it is an ability which we all have and which can indeed be improved through practice. It is worth noting, then, that not one method can automatically produce good writers either: the process-approach discussed for the purposes of this material package is not consequently a selected answer, but it does consider individual differences more largely (Hyland 2009: 25), which is one of the main reasons why it was chosen. Before discussing the process approaches, however, the next section examines the journey towards the writing ability.

2.2. Towards the writing ability

After examining the possible abilities of a good writer and concluding that one's writing can indeed be improved through practice, the following sections discuss the different variables which serve as a framework for writing. These serve as the basis for the warm-up exercises included in the package, which aid the students before moving on to process writing and creating whole texts.

To start with, I introduce a list from Pincas (1982: 26), which includes nine essential writing skills which can be improved with practice. Pincas states that while the overall aim is to increase writing competence, the automatic writing ability, it is most useful for poor writers to isolate different processes and skills in order to work towards that competence piece by piece (Pincas 1982: 26). Hyland (2004: 8) agrees on this and notes that "it is not enough to equip students with the strategies of good writers and step back and let them get on with it". One of the main aims of this package is to offer students skills and strategies on the different areas of writing, so that they can learn to draw from them in their individual writing processes in order to produce coherent and meaningful texts.

Listed below are the nine skills according to Pincas (1982) and an elaboration on their effect on one's writing and the finished product:

1. Communication between people

One of the main aims of this material package is to have students see writing as communication, rather than just as lonely words on paper. In writing it is most important to imagine one's audience and the effect the produced text might have on them. Once a writer is able to clarify for themselves the aim of their text, or what it is they want to achieve by their words, it is also easier to find those words.

2. Suiting a specific subject

Once a writer has set goals for their text and imagined their presumable audience, they must consider how they could best achieve their goals. At this point they should choose a text type which suites their topic and which allows them to explore it most effectively. This is one of the core ideas behind genre-based teaching of writing. An open, freely arranged letter might not be the best choice if writing a letter of application in hopes of getting a job. Choosing the most suitable text type for one's purposes inevitably affects the outcome.

3. Presenting ideas

For foreign language writers the skill of presenting ideas is most crucial. One might have all the key ideas in their head, but if they lack the skills to contrast or compare in English, they might find themselves out of tools for writing an argumentative text, for example. In foreign language writing, practice is needed in the area of presenting one's ideas most effectively. These how-to areas need to be chosen in accordance with the genre in process, of course.

4. Constructing sentences

Considering the focus group of the material package and assuming they have acquired the basic skills of sentence constructing in English, this part should mostly cover a comparison of different sentences and their effect on the reader. This allows students to develop their skills in the area of constructing sentences in a way which makes their text easy and interesting for an audience to read. Students can, for example, examine the effect of much too long and complicated sentences in a text.

5. Using paragraphs

Paragraphs help a reader to follow the main ideas and their development most effectively and easily. The aim is to make students aware of the effect of using paragraphs, and the negative effect on the reader if they are not used at all or are used poorly. Students ought to familiarize themselves with the common structure of paragraphs when writing in English - a topic sentence, reasoning and a concluding comment.

6. Using linking devices

Linking devices are one factor responsible for a coherent text. In this area, students ought to be made aware of other choices besides the traditional "and" particle. A text with effective linking devices makes itself easier for a reader to follow and more pleasant to read all in all.

7. Writing in (the four major styles) genres

Alongside process writing, this material package leans on genre-based teaching of writing. Genres are a part of our everyday lives and by learning how to make use of them, one learns how to fulfill their communicative needs most effectively. It is also most beneficial to examine genres as a framework, not as restrictions.

8. Achieving the desired degree of formality

In foreign language writing, learning how to be formal or informal can be crucial for the succession of a given text. A certain amount of formality is required in, for example, job applications, whereas some texts are more free when it comes to formal vocabulary and structure. Informality, however, is to be kept apart from speech-like writing.

9. Creating the desired emotive tone

Finally, a text can be edited and modified to reach a certain tone, which fits the genre chosen, and also the communicative aim of the text. If, for example, one wants to write an argumentative text on a given topic and aims to widen the perspective of others on the matter, one might not want to choose an aggressive or a much-too informative tone for the text. A tone of a text greatly affects the image a reader will have about the writer and their intentions.

Again, similar lists may occur in different publications from different specialists, but the list from Pincas was chosen to work as a basis for the exercises of this package as it effectively links to the aims of the material. One alteration has been made concerning the seventh skill, for which Pincas has chosen four major styles (=genres) to be studied, but the package includes two genres separate from these. Pincas (1982: 4) notes that motivation is indeed increased by realistic contexts, so

the genres have been accommodated to suit the relevant contexts students might write in today, such as when applying for a job or expressing their opinions.

The list from Pincas serves as a starting point for improving one's general writing skills and for overcoming, for example, a writer's block and the empty paper syndrome. This list is then supported by skills related to process writing and knowledge on genres, which, according to Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 251) include strategies for planning, for setting goals, for developing arguments, for attending to rhetorical constraints, for re-reading and for revising, and for evaluating their own writing.

In addition to mastering these basic writing skills, and the two approaches to writing, a set of other influential factors are known to affect the writing process. The following sections discuss scripts, scaffolding and the ability to understand the differences between written and spoken language, three factors which support the list from Pincas and together form a basis for the writing ability.

2.2.1 Scripts

"One never writes or speaks in a void" (Devitt 2004: 27). As this is true for everything we write or speak, writers' and readers' background knowledge has an important role in the succession of a given text. Background knowledge can include an understanding of intertextuality, genres, cultural norms and the meaning of context, to name a few. This knowledge is usually referred to as *scripts or schemata*, or a set of stereotypes, if you will. These scripts help us understand and interpret texts (Hyland 2009: 14), whether in the role of a reader, or a writer. The role of context, for example, can be crucial in distinguishing jokes from insults, and truths from tales.

Hyland (2004: 55) highlights that our ability to understand a text links to our ability to relate it to something we already know. He defines scripts as a "system for storing and retrieving past knowledge" (2004: 55). This links closely to the principles of process writing, which encourage teachers to use prewriting activities to allow students time to recall information and ideas needed to create a text (Hyland 2004: 55). This kind of knowledge allows readers to, for example, understand parodies, since they recognize it as impersonation (Hyland 2004: 70).

Scripts are closely related to and shaped by cultural experiences (Hyland 2004: 56). Hyland (2004: 54) encourages teachers of L2 or FL writing classes to acknowledge that writing is a culture and community bound practice, which in turn means that students need to made aware of how to use the foreign language in its specific contexts (Hyland 2004: 54). This knowledge should include students understanding the conventions of organizing a text, appropriate grammar and vocabulary, and the expected content of their texts (Hyland 2004: 54). This can be done by, for example, discussing appropriate vocabulary for a job application. Students may have culturally bound scripts on how to write an application in Finnish, but lack the means of choosing appropriate language and organization for a similar text in a foreign language.

2.2.2 Scaffolding

"Writing does not have to be a lonely task" (Pincas 1982: 5)

For many years, writing has been seen as a rather lonely task, dependent on one's individual cognitive abilities. While it is true, as stated, that writing is a highly individual process, the limits of one's cognitive abilities can be widened. *Scaffolding* is a term used to describe the temporal support teachers offer their students during the learning process (Razgulina-Lytsy 2012: 29). This support is

temporal in the sense that the goal is to increase the independent role of a learner and decrease the leading role of a teacher. Scaffolding thus refers to actions from the teacher which in time are to be taken in as a part of the learning process by students themselves (Razgulina-Lytsy 2012: 34). Razgulina-Lytsy lists task selection, task sequencing, group work, visual support and demonstration as examples of scaffolding in a classroom (2012: 42). In writing, this would preferably mean that writers are eventually able to select tasks according to their skill level, sequence the processes, seek group support, and exploit visual aids and example texts.

Westwood (2008: 63) notes that in the area of proofreading students need to be taught to use additional resources, such as dictionaries, since poor writers tend to "often limit the range of words they use to those that they can spell". Pincas (1982: 9) agrees on this and notes that at intermediate levels, a limited vocabulary will always cause problems during the writing process. In relation to this, it would be most useful to encourage students to see the benefits of exploiting technology during, or for, the writing process. In addition to instantly available dictionaries, Hyland (2009: 58) lists the effects of technology on writing, mentioning the possibility of editing, combining written text and visual aids, a non-linear writing process, access to information, readers being able to write back, to mention a few. These features can all be made use of according to the individual problem areas of students.

Many students may feel rather reluctant to express themselves in writing or experience difficulties in finding the correct ways to express their thoughts. Here, a teacher's role is to be a motivator, a provoker and a supporter (Harmer 2014: 41), so that students will not give up on a writing task. The overall aim is to enable the students to complete writing tasks on their own (Razgulina-Lytsy 2012: 32).

According to Westwood (2008: 70), in the area of writing teachers should combine direct instructions, such as demonstrations, and indirect instruction, such as constructive feedback. The overall aim of such feedback is to encourage students to reflect upon their text (Westwood 2008: 71). Explicit instructions can in turn mean step-by-step instructions, examining a genre, or explicit examples (Isaacson 2004: 39-54), which can help students struggling with the writing process especially in the beginning of a course, or even a single writing task.

2.2.3 The differences between spoken and written language

"Written language is not merely spoken language put on a paper"
(Weigle 2002: 19)

As stated earlier, writing can be used by different people, in different situations and for different purposes. This is also true for the contrast between speaking and writing - they are used in different contexts, for different reasons, and for different communicative purposes (Weigle 2002: 16). On this note, Pincas (1982: 9) suggests that it would be most useful to teach the differences between spoken and written English, such as full forms and contractions and formal and informal vocabulary. Studying these differences may have a significant impact on the development of one's writing skills (Horning 1986: 2).

In writing, a constant need for accuracy is almost always present, and thus the cognitive processes involved in writing differ significantly from those involved in speaking (Harmer 2014: 31). Since speaking is more instant in nature, speakers modify their utterances along the way using repetition, rephrasing and filler-expressions, such as "you know" (Harmer 2014: 8). In addition to considering what language supports a more coherent text, Hyland (2004: 76) notes that writers need to be more careful when using things that cannot necessarily be

taken for granted, such as "pointer words" (this, that, there), personal pronouns and the different ways of linking ideas.

When linking ideas in a conversation, then, one can use pauses and filler-expressions to gather their thoughts. The addressee can also be of aid during the linking by, for example, expressing that they know what the speaker is going to say next. In writing the absence of the addressee can at times cause implications, though it also allows more time for information retrieval and correcting one's thoughts (Weigle 2002: 17). However, the absence of the addressee almost inevitably challenges writers, since no immediate feedback can be received and a writer has to thus take into consideration the existing knowledge and interests of their expected reader or readers (Weigle 2002: 18). The next section discusses other similar problems which may occur during a writing process and the possible reasons behind them.

2.3. Problems in writing and their possible solutions

Writing is a cognitively challenging task which requires a lot from the writer: it involves generating new ideas, discovering one's own unique "voice", planning, goal-setting, monitoring, evaluating what has been written, and searching for language with which to express desired meanings (White and Arndt 1991: 3), just to mention a few. In addition, the process is rarely linear and all these challenges may burden the brain at the same time. Many struggle with the writing process and get frustrated with being unable to complete a writing task.

Hyland (2004: 77) considers possible factors that can affect a student's approach to writing, mentioning attitude towards the topic, the time and space they are writing in, possible stress created by the upcoming task, and additional resources available during the process. Indeed, the immediate context students are writing

in can both facilitate and constrain writing (Hyland 2009: 28). The writing context can, and at times should, be altered according to the needs of students. Westwood (2008: 78) points out that technology can, for example, be of use when dealing with students with writing anxiety, since they can modify their texts in peace. A larger context may also burden students, as they may sometimes feel like they are writing to compete with their classmates and other writers that have written on the same topic before them, like they have to prove their credibility (Hyland 2009: 34). This might be solved by discussing discourse communities and how each and every one can shape them with their writing, while also accepting that all texts are shaped by their predecessors.

An unwillingness to write may of course derive from other anxieties besides the immediate writing context - it might be, for example, that a student has rarely written anything even in their first language, so the overall process feels strange to them. These insecurities are likely to be reinforced when a student is not able to finish a given writing task successfully (Harmer 2014: 61). Anxiety causes difficulties in writing with students who might otherwise be entirely capable to perform the required task. These feelings of self-doubt about oneself as a writer may cause serious damage to the writing process, and also one's success in other educational areas. Anxious students may feel as if their writing will not be creative or interesting enough or that their thoughts will not be sufficiently expressed. These feelings, if not confronted, might lead to low self-esteem and the avoidance of writing tasks all in all (Hyland 2009: 29).

According to Saddler (2006: 291–305), once the basic writing skills are acquired, intermediate writers experience problems with generating ideas, sequencing the content and revising their texts. These problems can lead to a so-called "let's get this over with" approach to writing, where the writing task is seen as a question-answer type of situation. Shorter texts and irrelevant sections may also occur, as students struggle to meet the required text length and might feel as if they have

"nothing to say" (Harmer 2014: 61). The topic of a writing task can be either self-selected or assigned by the teacher, but in either case it is widely recognized that the topic has a great influence on the outcome of a writing task (Schoonen et. al. 2009: 77-102). Writing on a familiar topic is easier (Nation 2009: 114) and the opportunity to select one's own topic increases motivation and reduces the time needed for generating new ideas (Westwood 2008: 71).

Harmer (2014: 61) suggests that we should spend more time focusing on building a *writing habit*, that is, "making students feel comfortable as writers in English and so gaining their willing participation in more creative or extended activities." This should include ways of making sure students can complete a writing task and feel confident that their writing will continue to develop in a positive direction (Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 251), since lack of confidence may lead to students being reluctant to even try, to daydream and to make little or no effort to learn (Reason and Boote 1987: 5).

In addition to these difficulties which cause students to struggle with writing, the willingness to write may also be highly affected by the additional constraints which are a part of foreign language writing. Chapter three discusses these general writing problems in relation to the specified problems of foreign language writing and adds a focus on writing in English.

3 DIFFICULTIES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE WRITING

While first language writing essentially relies on existing language resources (Weigle 2002: 4), foreign language (FL) writing requires considerably more cognitive work from the writer. Hyland (2009: 78) emphasizes that most foreign language writers struggling with their texts are not failing as individual writers, but are struggling to control the conventions of the target language. The following sections discuss the possible problems students encounter in foreign language writing and when writing in English (EFL), specifically.

3.1. Foreign language writing

For many teachers and for several years, writing has been a means for learning and practising the language itself (Ortega 2009: 232-256). However, White & Arndt (1991: 3) note that proficiency in a language does not make writing easier. Writing needs to be taught as a "second language" in itself in all its varying contexts, more so in EFL contexts. If the purpose of writing is to solely increase language proficiency, students might feel less motivated and result in "pushed output", texts which rely mainly on L1 textual solutions (Ortega 2009: 232-256).

To begin with, writing in a foreign language may cause students to direct their attention to language, rather than content (Weigle 2002: 35). The ability to turn one's thoughts into words depends largely on the available linguistic resources (Schoonen et. al. 2009: 77-102), which are more limited when writing in a foreign language. Schoonen et. al. (2009: 77-102) call this process "formulating" and state that in order for the formulating process to be fluent, a student needs to be able to access their linguistic repertoire easily, so that the process will not overburden their working memory. Once it is overburdened by, for example, the process of retrieving words, it will result in focusing the remaining resources to linguistic

details, rather than the overall content and fluency of the text. The lack of linguistic resources will thus inevitably result in students struggling with the language, with no energy left for planning or reviewing (Schoonen et. al. 2009: 77-102). In this area, vocabulary building and retrieval exercises may help students to retrieve words more fluently, without having to use simplified vocabulary for the thoughts they want to express (Schoonen et. al. 2009: 77-102).

Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 25) discuss possible problems in EFL writing, listing amongst others language interference, educational experiences in L1, interlanguage development, attitudes towards English, and writing motivations in L1. Indeed, while EFL writing is obviously affected by a student's L1, it is also affected by one's educational experiences in writing and the social and cultural contexts in which one has learned to write in (Rinnert and Kobayashi 2009: 23-49). These contexts have had a major impact on the formation of writing motivation and attitudes towards writing altogether.

According to Manchon et. al. (2009: 102-130), "foreign language writing is certainly a multilingual event". Switching between one's L1 and L2 is common during the writing process and one can most certainly use their entire linguistic repertoire to support the different subprocesses. Manchon et. al. (2009: 102-130) suggest that one's L1 can be used for the role of a "controller", that is, for planning and monitoring, for example. This could help derive attention away from worrying about the fact that the writing is happening in a foreign language.

Without the security of one's L1, foreign language writing might be affected by, for example, difficulties in understanding instructions or a source text (Weigle 2002: 36). Another issue might be a limited time frame, since FL writers require notably more time for writing (Weigle 2002: 37). Students may also be unclear on the knowledge base of their readers and thus might feel unsure on what to

include in their texts (Hyland 2004: 73), a problem which could be solved with peer feedback and content negotiation.

While foreign language writing can be seen as a problem-solving task, involving multiple linguistic problems (Manchon 2009: 12), it consists of more than just linguistic structures - a writer needs to have knowledge about the different genre conventions in the target language in order to be able to convey meanings most effectively (White and Arndt 1991: 75). Most learners might know exactly what they want to say, but have difficulties translating those ideas into coherent pieces of writing (Nation 2009: 120). Lack of genre knowledge might thus lead to the writing process being interrupted by a search for appropriate linguistic choices, which, in turn, leads to texts which do not match the original ideas a writer had in the beginning of the process (Weigle 2002: 36).

3.2. Writing in English

In addition to considering the problems students encounter when writing in a foreign language in general, one might want to direct attention to some of the main features of the English language which affect writing. These features can be addressed in the classroom, for acknowledging them might narrow the gap between the writing norms of the present L1 and the foreign language, English, used for writing.

Features of this kind might include differences in grammar and the writing system (Weigle 2002: 7), which is why the linguistic typological distance of L1 from English needs to be considered in EFL contexts (Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 248). As stated earlier, the differences between spoken and written language need to be addressed, as foreign language students might experience difficulties in spelling. However, the aim is not to assume a structural approach to writing, but

more to see these grammatical features as building blocks for coherent and fluent texts (Hyland 2003: 3). Students struggling with grammatical features might get frustrated with being unable to express their thoughts correctly (Hyland 2003: 34). The aim, thus, is to examine language features which affect understanding and the fluency of a text. When writing in English, these might include articles, tenses, and word order.

Hyland (2009: 57) explains that English, unlike several other languages, is a language where the writer is responsible for effective communication. This explains the use of explanatory sentences such as "to conclude" and "I will present three points", which might not be that common in other languages. A writer has to thus make noticeable connections between ideas, so that a reader can follow these connections rather effortlessly (Weigle 2002: 21). Also typical for the written English language is to include a topic sentence in each paragraph, which is followed by examples and explanations, and a conclusion of some sort (Harmer 2014: 9).

One other feature discussed earlier, the formality of a text, is also relevant here. Pincas (1982: 46) notes that in order for students to best acquire an ability to write fluently in English, they need to be demonstrated how words and structures are used in authentic writing contexts. Formal and informal language can differ in the L1 and in English, and students ought to be made aware of how these work in practice, so that direct translations from language to language might be avoided. The differences between registers and tones need to be demonstrated in order for the students to see how these work in English, so they can themselves choose appropriate language in their own texts (Harmer 2014: 27). This can, for example, help them understand how the choice of words affects the register or how the tone of a text is responsible for the formality or informality of it (Harmer 2014: 26). This can be achieved through genre practice: Kachru (1999: 78) notes that genres do not always have equal counterparts in different cultures and in

addition, at times, similar situations may require different genres across cultures. By examining different genres in written English, students can be offered a wide range of examples from different tones and registers and the language used to implement these.

After examining the writing ability and the difficulties that might occur during the writing process, we now move on to the actual processes and the suggested solutions for approaching these difficulties. The introduction of a process approach to teaching writing in chapter three is followed by genre-based writing instruction in chapter four.

4 PROCESS-BASED TEACHING

The process approaches to writing emerged in the 1980s as a response to product-based approaches, where focus was on the finalized written product, the text, and not the writing process itself. However, White and Arndt (1991: 5) note that the process approach does not include losing all interest towards the product, but emphasizes the journey towards that final draft. This method is most suited for poor writers who struggle during the different subprocesses of writing and often fail to produce a coherent text, or even a finished text at all. The following sections discuss the effectiveness of process writing in writing teaching and introduce a suggestion of the subprocesses, as listed by Nation (2009).

4.1 The effectiveness of process-based teaching

Harmer (2014: 34), describes process-based approaches as teaching "writing for writing". Students struggling with the writing process have difficulties following writing tasks presented to them as orders, such as "write a news article". One of the main benefits of process writing is the ability to see the different subprocesses of the writing process, and the possibility of examining these parts individually in order to see, which parts a writer needs to work on (Nation 2009: 123). By working on these subprocesses, students acquire valuable strategies for writing, thus studying "writing for writing" and not, for example, for learning a grammar point of some sort. White and Arndt (1991: 2) note that while grammar is undoubtedly important, it should been seen as a tool for writing, and not as something to be focused on at the expense of learning how to write fluently.

With a process approach, students should not feel the pressure to produce a perfect piece immediately, but can learn to revise their texts (Westwood 2008: 70-71) and to work towards that final draft piece by piece. The aim is to motivate

and interest students in writing for authentic purposes, rather than have them see writing as an another mechanic task (Westwood 2008: 70). Nation (2009: 171) states that a process approach is most useful for writing classes as it allows students to take time to observe their performance during the different subprocesses and reflect on it. Hyland (2003: 12) agrees on this and highlights the importance of reflection: according to him, teachers should aim to develop their students' abilities to reflect on their writing strategies and to see, where there is room for improvement. In this, the process approach also emphasizes the importance of feedback (Hyland 2003: 12), which is discussed in chapter five.

While the process approach does emphasize the role of an independent writer, it also aims to consider the actions a teacher can take to help their students complete a writing task (Hyland 2003: 10). As stated earlier, writing does not have to be a lonely task, but should be seen as an individual process which can be supported at any stage, by the teacher, by peers or by additional aids, such as dictionaries or example texts.

Summarizing process approaches as opposed to product approaches, Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 87) list meaningful writing, topics of importance, planning, pre-writing tasks, multiple drafts, a variety of feedback options, and content over grammar as the main differences between the two. They also mention the fact that process writing has encouraged "free writing", i.e. ways of generating ideas and overcoming the infamous writer's block. One of the main arguments against a process approach to writing has been its tendency to require a lot of time, which it inevitably does. However, when time is limited, a process approach can be exploited for developing overall writing fluency. This can be done by using *instant writing* (Harmer 2014: 13, italics in original), which can be seen as another term for free writing. The aim is to help students overcome the empty paper syndrome, that is, to feel confident about being able to produce text on any given topic.

To summarize, the aim of a process approach to writing is to equip students with writing strategies which they can use to solve future writing problems and which serve as a tool for turning drafts into a coherent, appropriate piece of text (White and Arndt 1991: 5). The next section explores the different subprocesses of writing and the strategies that collide with these, and which are the core content of the material package.

4.2 The processes of writing

The actual processes, or stages, included in the process of writing have been listed and named by several researches, all having listed at least some form of rewriting and editing. Nation's (2009: 114) list of subprocesses was chosen since it was considered to be the clearest and most straightforward, and also suited well the goals of this thesis. I will elaborate each of the subprocesses, leaning on other sources as well to support Nation's views.

According to Nation (2009: 114), the writing process can be divided into seven subprocesses as follows:

1. Warming up, getting to know a genre.

In addition to examining examples of a given genre, familiarizing oneself with a new genre should include analysis and interpretation of them in terms of the different elements which they might consist of. These elements can be divided into required and optional ones, which in turn can be analyzed as servants of different rhetorical purposes. This process teaches genre awareness, which should avoid the pitfall of students mimicking the example texts instead of understanding the rhetorical meanings of each element in the text (Devitt 2004:

201). Even with the possibility of copying, though, example texts are a way of offering students tools for writing their own texts within the required genre constraints (Harmer 2014: 28).

2. Considering the goals of the writer.

According to Nation (2009: 124), a writer struggling with considering the goals they have for their text produces pieces which lack a cohesive purpose. This might also be due to students seeing writing tasks as exercises which need to be dealt with as quickly as possible. In this stage, it is important to motivate students with interesting topics and authentic writing contexts, as well as authentic reader reactions from other audiences besides the teacher. Once students are able to see their texts having actual purposes, they might not feel pressured to produce "forced" output in order to meet the demanded text length.

3. Having a model of the reader/the audience.

Nation (2009: 124) notes that not having a model of an intended reader results in texts which offer either too much or too little information. Students might be used to seeing their texts as assignments to be graded by the teacher, and not read by an actual audience. Weigle (2002: 18) states that having a model reader is crucial to the writing process, as the ability to consider one's audience and alter the message accordingly is what separates expert and inexpert writers.

It can be challenging, at times, for students to consider other possible readers besides the teacher, which is why writing classes should aim for students having a sense of writing for a "real" reader (Pincas 1982: 30). Hyland (2009: 32) notes that the issues of an intended audience have indeed promoted peer feedback, as it helps to see how others react to one's writing. According to him, the writing process always involves creating a text that the reader will recognize, which in

turn aids the choosing of appropriate style, genre and content (2009: 31). He encourages teachers to create writing contexts which reflect authentic writing situations relevant to students (Hyland 2009: 33).

4. Gathering ideas.

In this stage, most insecure writers feel as if they have "nothing to say" (Nation 2009: 124). The stage of gathering ideas should help students to produce text later on and not struggle with an empty paper or a writer's block.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987: 7) note that while generating content without the support from a conversational partner or a concrete audience might be problematic, students can be supported by allowing them to discover other sources for retrieving content. Gaudiani (1981: 45) suggests that teachers might advise students to make "shopping lists" of some keywords, which might stimulate ideas and help a writer to approach a given subject. Other means for gathering ideas might be peer discussions, brainstorming, mind maps, stimulating games, or the use of preliminary materials such as videos or pictures.

5. Organizing ideas.

Nation (2009: 125) states that the inability to organize one's ideas results in texts which are notably difficult to follow, do not get a reader's attention, and are either too predictable or unpredictable. White and Arndt (1991:44) compare the topic sentence or the focal idea of a text to the focal point of a photographer when taking a picture. Students should thus be taught to estimate what they should include in their texts in the same way that they might decide where to focus their camera.

According to Pincas (1982: 59), each paragraph needs to have a logical pattern and sentences joined together and related to each other. One of the main things a writer should do, then, is to practice joining sentences and paragraphs together to make a coherent text (Pincas 1982: 51).

6. Turning ideas into written text.

Students struggling with the stage of turning their ideas into actual written text often produce shorter, poorly connected pieces which include poorly constructed sentences and numerous errors (Nation 2009: 125). They might have a clear idea of what they want to say, but lack the means of conveying them (Hyland 2004: 67). At this point, genre knowledge can help students to generate genre appropriate text and to seek aid from previous texts written in a given genre.

Gaudiani (1981: 44) notes that "directed themes" might be of large help during the writing process, meaning helpful questions orienting students to the possible contents of their text. In turn, Manchon et. al. (2009: 102-130) introduce the concept of "backtracking", i.e. going through what one has already written in order to generate new text.

7. Reviewing what has been written.

In this stage, a poorly reviewed text can appear as poorly organized and presented (Nation 2009: 125). According to Harmer (2014: 25), coherence is achieved by sequencing information. In this stage, one might turn back to examining logical connectors: Gaudiani (1981: 44) states that logical connectors such as "but" and "although" are not to be treated as discrete pieces of grammar, but as tools for making coherent and mature sentences. Pincas (1982: 56) lists six ways to link sentences together, other than the frequent "and": reference (the chancellor - he), conjunction (yet, as a result, after this), substitution (avoid

repetition), lexical relationships (synonyms, repetition, umbrella words, ellipsis), and patterning (linking sentences, parallel structures).

For some students, it might be even harder to rewrite, than to write in the first place: they might find it challenging to find the pieces that could be changed, deleted or discussed further (Hyland 2009: 1). In this, peer feedback is most useful. Students might also be reminded of self-repairing themselves all the time when they speak, so that the process of rewriting might not feel so overwhelming, but like a necessary and useful part of writing.

8. Editing.

Nation (2009: 125) concludes that a failure in the editing stage of writing can be detected from repeated and careless errors, which might be due to students being reluctant to respond to feedback. As stated earlier, the writing process is not linear (Harmer 2014: 5) and students should thus be encouraged to see editing as a possible process in any stage of the overall writing process, and not just a set of polishing actions at the end of the process.

As for possible features to be worked on in the editing stage, Isaacson (2004: 39-54) lists sentence fluency and variety, word choices, and spelling/punctuation to improve readability. In turn, Al-Maskari (2012: 30-34) reminds writers to avoid outdated expressions, repetition, and turning verbs into nouns.

These suggestions as the subprocesses of writing allow teachers to focus on and to elaborate the different stages of the writing process and aid students who, perhaps, are not at all aware of these stages they ought to go through before reaching a final draft. The aim is to first make students aware of these processes and the possible ways of working through them and in this way to move towards an automatic and fluent writing process where these processes are not linear, but

can be utilized at any point. The visualization of these processes is supported by a familiarization with genres, discussed in the next chapter.

5 GENRE-BASED TEACHING

"It is this potential for giving students more control over language that most drives me to argue for teaching genre awareness" (Devitt 2004: 211)

Genres are a part of our everyday lives, whether we acknowledge it or not - we modify our language choices according to context and thus make sense of social situations in which we write or speak in (Hyland, 2009: 69). Without genres, writing would inevitably descend into chaos, as there would be only variation and no meaning (Devitt 2004: 150). Genre-based teaching has been chosen to complement the effects of process writing in this material package by guiding students to see how texts are constructed, and for what purposes. The following sections introduce genre as a term and its benefits on the teaching of writing.

5.1. Defining genre

Genre-based teaching of writing is the successor of communicative approaches and indeed emerged as a response to process approaches (Hyland 2004: 7). Communicative approaches emphasize situational language use and in relation, genre approaches rely on a writer's understanding of context (Hyland 2004: 24). While various definitions of genre differ in details, an idea of a shared communicative purpose is a common factor for almost all (Hyland 2004: 57).

Hyland (2004: 4) defines genre as "a term for grouping texts together, representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations". Indeed, while genres can serve as a way of labeling texts, Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 242) note that genres are always connected to meaning: they serve the intended purposes of writing. After all, writing is fundamentally based on expectations, that is, readers interpreting writer purposes and writers

anticipating reader reactions (Hyland 2004: 4). This is why a knowledge of genres can be said to include the understanding of the common ways to express different purposes (Harmer 2014: 17).

Similarly to communicative approaches, most genre studies refuse to see genres only as a set of rules, forms, to be followed. Seeing genres as restricted forms to be filled with content is similar to seeing texts as merely products, ignoring the writing process and the writer behind it (Devitt 2004: 5). In addition to expecting a certain form, say, from a news article, readers also have expectations towards the purposes, subject matter and writer of the text (Devitt 2004: 12). Most expect their news article to come from a reporter, to be of a current topic, and its purpose to be reporting the news. Thus, genres rely notably on each participant, their social context and also, intertextuality (Devitt 2004: 12).

Devitt (2004: 138) argues that while genres constrain writers in a certain way, they also enable them to be creative. Genres can be merged and ideas can be borrowed from one genre to another (Devitt 2004: 151). While some features must be present in order for a genre to be recognized (Hyland 2004: 65), others can be more optional. Genre knowledge should thus include and understanding of possible variation opportunities, while still considering the original function and appropriateness of a text (Hyland 2004: 64).

5.2. The effectiveness of genre-based teaching

Hyland (2004: 21) notes that while subprocesses such as planning and drafting are an important part of writing, it should be noted that these are only a part of the overall process. While genre-based teaching of writing certainly considers the actual writing process and acknowledges that writing is not a mechanical process, it also focuses on the communicational side of writing: we want to

achieve something with our writing, we aim for communication of some kind (Hyland 2004: 5). Genres are most useful for writing classes as they combine language, content and contexts, which enables students to see explicitly how genres are used in everyday communication (Hyland 2004: 6).

Hyland (2009: 37) highlights that the ability to produce a genre does not collide with general writing skills. Once these general skills are acquired, students can be guided towards understanding how language is used to create different genres and how these genres meet different communicational needs. According to Hyland (2009: 37), the role of genres is to help students learn the conventionalized text practices of their immediate discourse communities, that is, to help them communicate most effectively in the contexts most relevant to them. Knowledge on genres can encourage more conscious language choices (Devitt 2004: 212) and allow students to have some control over language, to have the ability to exploit genres to their benefit.

If a student is asked to read an example text and then to imply the features of that text to their own writing, they might treat examples as *models* and not *examples*, which they should be (Harmer 2014: 29, italics in original). These example texts should be combined with questions, which assist a writer to generate ideas and to acquire their own strategies for creating similar texts (Westwood 2008: 73). Genre approaches also recognize the importance of peer interaction and scaffolding as a part of the writing process (Hyland 2004: 121), which suggests in itself that a set of model texts is not enough for students to be able to create their own writing habit.

Hyland (2004: 11-16) summarizes the benefits of genre-based teaching, mentioning that it is explicit, systematic, needs-based, supportive, empowering, critical and consciousness raising. By empowering he means that genre knowledge can provide access to, for example, legal or academic texts. In turn,

by critical and consciousness raising he means that genre knowledge allows students to understand different discourses and to be able to challenge them (Hyland 2009: 17).

According to Harmer (2014: 30), a focus on genre does not demand lesser attention for the writing process - these two approaches can and should be balanced. A combination of this kind should help students construct different texts more fluently than before. Hyland (2004: 21) summarizes that the combination will result in students having a better understanding of the process of writing, the purposes of writing, and the way contexts give meaning to texts.

Writing is a task which requires a lot from the person holding the pen, or staring at a keyboard. Many students find themselves out of ideas and tools for writing and repeatedly hand in unfinished texts. By examining the process of writing in detail and by focusing on supporting students during the different subprocesses, teachers can aid their students on the journey towards a writing ability.

6. FRAMEWORK OF THE MATERIAL PACKAGE

This chapter explains the framework of this material package. However, since the teaching of writing should always be based on the learners needs and current competence as writers (Nation 2009: 94), teachers using the material are advised to use them selectively and alter them according to the needs of their students.

6.1 Aims

The core aim of this material package is to offer aid to students who are struggling with foreign language writing. Support is offered in the area of writing in a foreign language, specifically English, and of writing in general. The aim is to localize the problems they encounter during the process of writing and offer them tools to overcome these, and in this way guide them in the process of developing their writing ability and building an active and fluent writing habit.

Another aim is to indeed encourage students to see writing as a process, rather than a product. Many students have an idea of writing as an inner ability someone can possess, an ability which cannot be practiced or developed – either you are a good writer, or you are not. This material aims to help students visualize the different stages of writing and see that they can improve their writing skills by, for example, planning ahead and gathering ideas before picking up a pen. By practicing the writing process point-by-point, students can develop their skills little by little and later on automatize these processes and develop a habit for writing.

6.2 Target group

The material was designed to be used as a basis for an optional writing course for upper secondary education in Finland, for students who have studied English

for six years or more (aged 17 and over) and who have Finnish as their mother tongue. This is based on the idea that students need to have a considerable amount of control over the language before they can begin to alter it to suit their varying communicative needs (Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 251). At this age students are also assumed to have some experience in writing, both in English and in Finnish, and to have a basic understanding of the concept of genres, introduced in the Finnish lessons. The material can, however, be adapted to suit other age groups and skill levels by, for example, decreasing the required text length. The warm-up tasks especially include creative exercises that can, for example, be used in Finnish writing lessons.

6.3 Organization of the material package

The package consists of two main parts, the warm-up section and the writing section, which has been further divided into two parts. Both of these parts concentrate on an individual genre and the process of learning to write according to its frames. The genres chosen are *a job application* and *an argumentative text*.

The National Core Curriculum (NCC) for Upper Secondary Schools mentions briefly that, starting from course three, more attention is to be paid on different texts types and the specific language they require (NCC: 110). This suggests that the aim in writing teaching in upper secondary schools is to indeed familiarize students with different text types and the language specific to them and to offer them tools for producing these texts, which is also one of the main aims of this material package. In Finland, the Core Curriculum is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which offers a description of one's writing skills on the proficiency level of B2 (the target level for upper secondary school) as follows: "I can write clearly and in detail of topics that interest me. I can draw up an essay or a report in which I convey information or

present arguments for or against a given viewpoint. I can write letters in which emphasize the personal meaning of events or experiences". Based on these, I have chosen the two genres mentioned above. A job application is a genre in which students have to use language suited specifically for a formal letter of application, and also a genre which resembles a personal letter in many ways. This is also a genre which students will most definitely have to deal with at some point during their lives. The second genre, an argumentative text, agrees with the aims of the Common European Framework for the part of knowing how to write an essay in which one presents arguments for or against a given viewpoint.

For the warm-up section, the list from Pincas (1982) serves as a framework for the tasks, which aim to release tension and to offer strategies for controlling the basic elements of fluent writing. In addition, tasks for comparing written and spoken language, for using additional aids (such as dictionaries) and for overcoming restrictive factors, such as a writer's block or the empty paper syndrome, are included in this section.

For the two genres chosen, the process approach is used to allow students to get a clear image of writing as a process. A list of the different subprocesses has been suggested by Nation (2009) and the familiarization of the writing process is conducted through these steps. The tasks centre around learning to exploit different sources and strategies in each subprocess, so that students could then proceed towards automating these processes.

6.4 Task types

The package consists of two main parts: the warm-up section and the writing section. The warm-up exercises circle around two main themes: *understanding writing,* and *understanding texts.* First, students visualize themselves as writers

and identify the factors which affect writing and, also, the reading experience. Students are encouraged to see writing as communication and to take into consideration, for example, the tone and formality of their texts. Then, they turn their attention to texts: tasks include learning to construct sentences and using linking devices and paragraphs to create a fluent text.

Both of the two sections include tasks which aim to stimulate the production of text and to create ideas for content. With these, the aim is to reduce the possibility of an empty paper syndrome and of a writer's block. By using these types of stimulative exercises before writing students can avoid "having nothing to say". Exercises include acting, drawing, mind-mapping and otherwise visualizing, for example, one's audience and goals as a writer.

The second part, the writing section, focuses on creating two pieces of writing by following the list of subprocesses from Nation (2009: 114). First, students get to know the chosen genre. Then, they gather and organize their ideas, turn those ideas into text and, finally, review and edit their creations. The exercises in this section include sample texts, searching for key words and elements and using a cheat-sheet to organize those elements. The tasks also aim to distance students from the fear of having to immediately produce a perfect piece of text: this emphasizes the writing process and all its parts, including planning and the gathering of ideas.

Peer feedback and the sharing of ideas is central in the material, since they also aim to prove that writing does not have to be a lonely task. Sharing is encouraged throughout the course, since giving and receiving feedback stimulates ideas and helps students to develop their texts even further.

6.5 Assessment

The following sections discuss the benefits of portfolio assessment and peer feedback, which have been chosen as the suggested means of evaluating the outcome of using the material.

In reference to the sense of authenticity and a real audience discussed earlier, it is also worth mentioning that several researchers encourage the publishing of students' texts (see eg. White and Arndt 1991: 10). Nowadays technology allows more variability in assessment methods and mediums, which, for example, encourages teachers to use blog sites as mediums for sharing texts. Alternative ways of publication include reading aloud, having a text circulated or posted on the wall, or printing it (Nation 2009: 138). In consequence, teachers using this material package are advised to consider using publication as a means of giving and receiving feedback.

6.5.1 Portfolio assessment

In accordance to the principles of process writing, Krashen (1984: 11) states that feedback should be given during the process in itself, that is, between drafts and not on the finalized product. Instead of summing writing skills in a single grade, students should be provided with a description of their strengths and weaknesses, while considering the amount of preparation they include in their writing (Nation 2009: 147). These qualities are embodied in portfolio assessment, which is most commonly chosen for process-based writing teaching.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 378) remark that before the process approaches, feedback on writing usually consisted of a final grade and red ink error correction. Portfolio assessment and peer feedback gained ground along the process approaches to encourage students to learn from the feedback and not

throw the red inked paper away immediately after receiving it. According to Weigle (2002:197), the problem with evaluating individual writing samples is that they do not provide information about the ability to write in different genres and for different audiences, nor do the test the ability to write in non-testing situations.

Hyland (2004: 177) defines portfolios as "multiple writing samples, written over time and purposefully selected to best represent a student's abilities, progress, or most successful texts in a particular context", which makes it most suitable for both genre-based and process-based teaching of writing. Indeed, the strengths of portfolio assessment include the possibility of evaluating multiple writing samples across genres, student's reflection on their own writing, the sense of a realistic audience, and the possibility to choose which texts are going to be evaluated (Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 418). Weigle (2002: 202-206) adds multiple drafts, additional time, authenticity and interactiveness to this list, while Hyland (2004: 178) mentions that portfolios increase validity, since multiple samples are being assessed and the evaluation is largely connected to the content of teaching. Weigle (2002: 200) emphasizes the role of reflection and notes that a simple collection is not yet a portfolio: according to her, reflection and deliberate arrangement are what makes a collection of writing samples into a portfolio. She suggests that for self-evaluation a portfolio should include a reflective essay where the learner can provide explanation for their choices and evaluate their own progress as a writer. She also encourages conferencing, i.e. a meeting to discuss the teacher's evaluation of the portfolio, which also serves as an opportunity for the student to ask for clarification on some points (Weigle 2002: 215). While the contents and a possible conferencing meeting can be decided locally, a suggestion for the contents and the evaluation of a portfolio is included in the material package.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 419) estimate that a well-executed portfolio could become a useful resource for future writing. The aim of this material package is to provide students with a portfolio which will help them in future writing processes and in which they can find aid to confront the possible problems they might encounter.

6.5.2 Peer feedback

In addition to portfolio assessment and suggestions from the teacher, peer feedback is encouraged by several researchers (see eg. Westwood 2008:61). The benefits of peer feedback include accepting reader responses, sharing ideas, negotiating intentions, learning the language of responding, and the need for other audiences than the teacher, as discussed earlier (Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 379).

When it is prompted by peers, revision of texts can be a social and collaborative stage in writing (Ortega 2009: 232-2560). As mentioned earlier, passive reactions to feedback on writing are a continuous problem. Corrective feedback from the teacher can be seen as nothing more than "commands which have to be obeyed" (Harmer 2014: 115). Collaborative in nature, peer feedback provides a nonthreatening format for sharing one's work (Gaudiani 1981: 45) and encourages students to see revision as a vital and useful stage in writing. By evaluating others, and in turn learning to respond to evaluation, students will build up capacity for self-assessment, which is central in processing writing (White and Arndt 1991: 117).

However, it is most important to first educate students on how to give constructive feedback. Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 377) note that students can become frustrated with writing if they receive unclear or vague comments on

their texts. While the need for other audiences is included in the benefits of peer feedback, some students may not find peer evaluation adequate enough (Nation 2009: 144). Min (2005: 293-308) reports a study which investigated the effect of coaching students to become better peer reviewers. The results showed an increase in the amount of comments, more relevant and specific comments, a rise in self-confidence, and increased ability to avoid the errors they see in others' papers. In accordance with this, exercises for giving constructive feedback are included in the material package.

In addition, Min (2005: 293-308) notes that in EFL contexts peer feedback may cause problems due to possible misunderstandings and vague feedbacks caused by the lack of language competence. Learning the language of responding, as mentioned earlier, thus has a more central role in EFL contexts. This should be noted in the teaching of giving feedback so that the lack of vocabulary, for instance, does not prevent students from giving explicit feedback. However, varying levels of competence may be of use in peer feedback, as students with differing strengths may extend the other's writing skills in areas of weakness (Min 2005: 293-308).

In conclusion, the suggested means for evaluating the outcome of the material is the combination of peer feedback on the drafts and a portfolio, which assesses the way students make use of the received feedback.

7 Discussion

This material package was inspired by the lack of materials in the area of foreign language writing, and writing in general, especially in the area of Finnish students writing in English. The material was designed to aid students who struggle with the writing process and often fail to produce a finished text. The aims of this package are to encourage students to see writing as a process, rather than as a product and, most importantly, as a skill which can be improved through practice. By using the material students will hopefully develop a fluent writing habit, which will support them in all of their future writing needs.

The material was designed to be used as a basis for an optional writing course for students aged 17-19. They can, however, be altered to fit other target groups as well – by lowering the amount of writing and reading, for example. The package consists of two main parts, the warm-up exercises and then the actual processing writing, and many of the warm-up exercises can be used with students of all ages. They can also be used as introductions to the topic of writing in general. However, since the material is based on learning the whole process of writing with its different stages, the material most likely works best as a whole, as a continuum.

The strength of the material lies on the fact that students are not simply given a writing task and a piece of paper, but shown all the different angles from which writing can be approached. They see factors which can affect both the writing and the reading experience in action and learn to use these factors for their advantage. The material also relies on students' abilities to give feedback to each other and also to react to it, learn from it and to use it to develop one's writing skills. Thus, one of the key elements needed for the material to work is a group willing to support each other throughout the course by giving honest and

constructive feedback to each other, and by aiding each other to come up with ideas and content for their texts.

One weakness of the material could be that it relies partly on students' willingness to act, or to draw and make mind-map related solutions. The decisions behind these tasks were made based on a simple though: it helps to actually *see* the things affecting one's writing. Writing is most often seen as a lonely task, which takes place inside our heads, in silence. However, we rarely write texts which end up in our drawer for nobody to see: writing is *communication*, and we have to consider both our goals as a writer, and our audience. Acting or drawing these can help students visualize the concepts, which have often stayed invisible during the writing process.

Another important question restricting the material might be the question of printing. The material was originally designed to be implemented on paper so that students could actually gather their texts and tasks to a binder. However, the binder can obviously be replaced by a Word-document or some other platform. A portfolio can take many forms and is indeed a method of assessing which welcomes creativity.

In the future, this package could be improved after a series of test drives with different groups. The material was designed for students who struggle with writing and need point-by-point instructions for how to get words down on paper. The effect of the material can only be discovered through actual testing, though. Another interesting angle would be to see the long-term effects of a course such as this one: will students get excited about writing and even practice it on their own time? Do they find writing tasks at school easier after using the material? It is also possible for the course to have students whose skills in writing vary quite a bit, since students can choose the course as an optional, additional

course and thus choose it for an "easy pass", if they are skillful writers or happen to like writing altogether.

As a whole, the package should encourage students to write even when they feel as if they have nothing to say. They should see their text as a product which can be altered along the way, multiple times, and which then represents their best efforts at its final stage. However, writing is a task which requires time, patience and effort and is not a skill to be learned in a day, or even two. The material aims to give a basis for students to build upon and develop their writing skills towards *a habit*.

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9 Appendix: On a journey towards a writing habit

On a journey towards a writing habit: a material package

Table of Contents

THE HOW-TO

Hello, and welcome - glad you have chosen to use this material package! The following materials are designed as a handbook for you, the teacher, although some exercises contain parts which can be printed and handed out for students to write on. Printing is optional, though, since you can use other means of showing the assignments and examples to your students, such as a projector.

The question of printing might be one you want to solve straight away - generally, all one needs for the materials is a pen and a paper. As an exception, you will find two handouts which should be printed and handed out at the beginning of the course: *a cheat-sheet for process writing (x2)* and *an extra: a writer's block.* The extra can be used at any time, whereas the cheat-sheet will be used for the two texts produced during the course. The empty spaces are meant for comments and ideas.

The material consists of two main parts: the warm-up section and the writing section. The numbers of the following headlines suggest a lesson plan: for example, lesson 1 would include the topics *The texts around us, Fears & concerns and Speaking* and *writing.* The division is merely a suggestion, though, and can be altered throughout the course, since it would be almost impossible to predict how much time each of the topics takes. The warm-up section includes three topics per lesson, since they mostly consist of quicker individual exercises. The writing section, on the other hand, encourages you to slow things down and allow students more time to come up with ideas and to, of course, write. Thus, it includes one or two main themes per lesson.

The core aim of this material is to emphasize the process of writing – the journey from an empty paper to a finalized text. By looking at the small subprocesses of writing, we can help our students develop their writing skills in the areas that are most difficult for them. For some, it can be planning, for others, difficulties may appear when ideas need to be put down on paper. The warm-up tasks aim to stimulate ideas and to offer tools for effective and fluent writing. Then, two genres are created piece by piece in the writing

section. The genres chosen were *a job application* and *an argumentative text*: two very different, but (hopefully) equally useful genres for upper secondary school students.

Since the material emphasizes the process of writing, it would be most beneficial to use a portfolio for the assessment of this course. Before starting with the materials, give each student a binder or ask them to bring one with them to class. If you've chosen to use computers or tablets instead of paper, a portfolio can be created with, for example, a program such as Microsoft Word. Then, ask your students to collect each and every piece of writing, all their mind-maps and drawings, and other pieces they might produce during the course (to a Word-file or to a binder). At the end of the course students can then literally see their journey towards the writing ability. Discuss the contents of the portfolio with your students beforehand - although, its core elements ought to be the two texts produced for this course (a job application and an argumentative text). The portfolio should include all the notes and drafts of these two texts. In addition, a reflective essay is recommended - this also works as feedback for the teacher. A reflective essay should have students thinking about their development, strengths and weaknesses, their own identity as a writer, and their feelings towards the course.

What is more, the portfolio ought to be a useful guide in the future - these exercises aim to offer students tools for writing, i.e. tactics which they can use if they feel lost at some point during their future writing tasks. This is why I would recommend saving each and every piece students produce during the course. These can also help them to think back on their journey and write that reflective essay. Decide beforehand which exercises are to be included in the portfolio and which ones affect the grade, though. Also, encourage your students to decorate the portfolio in any way they would like to.

The exercises are designed to be used as a package, but many of the warm-up tasks (and other tasks as well) can be used on their own. Feel free to alter them to fit all age groups and skill levels, that's what they're there for.

Happy writing!

Lesson 1: The texts around us

First, students visualize themselves as writers and try to identify their writing habits.

A writer-profile

To start off, students create a writer-profile. Students can choose either *a) a mind-map* or *b) a short piece of writing* or if they want to and have time, both:

a) For a mind-map, students draw a picture of themselves in the middle and add words and sentences (or pictures, if possible) which describe them as a writer around it. They can also cut pictures out of magazines etc. If necessary, use the following questions as inspiration:

- Who do you usually write for – friends, teachers, employers, people on the Internet?
- Why do you write? Are you sharing information, being social, making notes?
- Do you write by hand or do you use your computer/phone?
- What languages do you write in? For what purposes?
- Where are you being evaluated/have been evaluated based on your writing – exams, entrance exams, job applications?
- Is your writing mostly formal or informal?
- What's your relationship with writing – get it done quickly or take-your-time-with it, or something in between?
- "As a writer I am…"
- "Writing is…"

b) For this in writing, students write a small text beginning with "as I writer I am…". Use the questions above to help them to produce content rather effortlessly, if necessary.

The texts around us

a) Students take pictures of texts they encounter in one day - especially of the texts they themselves write.

b) If possible, print these pictures, and make a small poster out of them. Students write or draw their feelings towards those pictures next to them – a little heart next to a WhatsApp message to a friend, the word “stress” next to a school assignment. The posters can be presented in class and put on the walls for everyone to see.

Lesson 1: Fears & concerns

The general ideas students have of writing have inevitably formed as a relation of their previous experiences, received feedback and advice on their texts.

Word art

Students write down words/phrases they associate with writing, for example "nothing to say, stress, takes a lot of time" etc. Encourage them to make "word art" of these, i.e. choose a font or draw something around the word. These can then be put into their portfolios and, at the end of the course, this exercise can be repeated to see if the words have changed.

Fixing and working

a) What kind of advice/feedback have they previously received on their writing? Students, in small groups or pairs, make a list of the different errors they been told to correct or points they've been advised to focus on.

b) Students then put these points in order from "easiest to work on" to "hardest to fix".

Lesson 1: Speaking and writing

Understanding the differences between speaking and writing can help students understand what is expected of them and their texts.

Let me tell you a story

a) Students work in pairs or in small groups. Each students tells a short story to the others – something that happened to them, or a friend, or something they heard. An anecdote, if you will.

b) After the conversation, students are given a piece of paper and advised to write the story they just told their peers down on paper. It doesn't need to be long, a short paragraph will do. Highlight that it doesn't need to be grammatically correct, either – the aim is to write something down.

c) Students have a group/pair conversation about the differences between written and spoken language. If needed, use the following support questions:

- Did you use different vocabulary when speaking/when writing?
- How much time did you spent writing/speaking?
- How did you start/finish?
- Did you plan your text at all, when writing or when speaking?
- Did you use filler words (umm, well, so, kind of)?
- Did you notice any change in the overall structure of the story?
- Was there a different sense of an audience, i.e. your friends listening to you vs. writing?
- Did you use hand gestures when speaking?
- Did you repeat or rephrase yourself more when speaking?

Writing vs. speaking

As a follow up, students draw two columns, titled “writing is…” and “speaking is…” and use their previous answers to fill them out.

Lesson 2: Scaffolding

Scaffolding = support given to enable learners perform a task beyond their present competence level

The texts for me

a) Choosing from the following, students list three tasks which seem difficult, and three that seem easy/doable:

a letter	a review (movies, games etc.)	a letter of complaint
a blogpost	a job application	a poem
an argumentative text	creative writing	a text message
a news article	a diary entry	or something else?

b) Then, in pairs or small groups, ask them to think about the reasons behind their choices. Text length, required vocabulary, formality, what else? The aim of this exercise is to aid students to, if given a choice, choose a task close to their own skill level.

Key words

a) To start off, students choose a topic they are interested in, for example a hobby of theirs, or choose from the following:

→ Movies, cooking, a specific sport, cars, travelling, animals…

b) Students then make a list of at least ten key words related to that topic. Ask them to list them in Finnish. The aim of this exercise is to teach students to use additional resources, such as dictionaries, before and during writing. By listing at least ten key words before writing they are prepared and will not get stuck because of the lack of vocabulary.

For example:

Movies: ohjaaja, käsikirjoittaja, näyttelijä, käsikirjoitus, lavaste, vuorosanat, kohtaus…

Dogs: tassut, kuono, lenkkeily, pentu, eläinlääkäri…

c) Then, have your students translate their key words into English. If needed, advise them to ask help from their peers or use a dictionary.

Lesson 2: Context and background knowledge

Click!

Students look for “click-headlines” i.e. news article headlines which are confusing and actually have nothing to do with the contents of the article. These can be in English or in Finnish.

a) Students gather these headlines and their “explanations” side by side, i.e. what additional information can be found in the actual article, which explains the headline.

b) Students have a conversation about misunderstandings and the importance of background knowledge.

Nacirema

a) Students read the following part from an essay written by *Horace Miner*. After reading, ask them of their general thoughts on it:

Body Ritual among the Nacirema

HORACE MINER
University of Michigan

THE anthropologist has become so familiar with the diversity of ways in which different peoples behave in similar situations that he is not apt to be surprised by even the most exotic customs. In fact, if all of the logically possible combinations of behavior have not been found somewhere in the world, he is apt to suspect that they must be present in some yet undescribed tribe. This point has, in fact, been expressed with respect to clan organization by Murdock (1949:71). In this light, the magical beliefs and practices of the Nacirema present such unusual aspects that it seems desirable to describe them as an example of the extremes to which human behavior can go.

Professor Linton first brought the ritual of the Nacirema to the attention of anthropologists twenty years ago (1936:326), but the culture of this people is still very poorly understood. They are a North American group living in the territory between the Canadian Cree, the Yaqui and Tarahumare of Mexico, and the Carib and Arawak of the Antilles. Little is known of their origin, although tradition states that they came from the east. According to Nacirema mythology, their nation was originated by a culture hero, Notgnihsaw, who is otherwise known for two great feats of strength—the throwing of a piece of wampum across the river Pa-To-Mac and the chopping down of a cherry tree in which the Spirit of Truth resided.

Nacirema culture is characterized by a highly developed market economy which has evolved in a rich natural habitat. While much of the people's time is devoted to economic pursuits, a large part of the fruits of these labors and a considerable portion of the day are spent in ritual activity. The focus of this activity is the human body, the appearance and health of which loom as a dominant concern in the ethos of the people. While such a concern is certainly not unusual, its ceremonial aspects and associated philosophy are unique.

The fundamental belief underlying the whole system appears to be that the human body is ugly and that its natural tendency is to debility and disease. Incarcerated in such a body, man's only hope is to avert these characteristics through the use of the powerful influences of ritual and ceremony. Every household has one or more shrines devoted to this purpose. The more powerful individuals in the society have several shrines in their houses and, in fact, the opulence of a house is often referred to in terms of the number of such ritual centers it possesses. Most houses are of wattle and daub construction, but the shrine rooms of the more wealthy are walled with stone. Poorer families imitate the rich by applying pottery plaques to their shrine walls.

While each family has at least one such shrine, the rituals associated with it are not family ceremonies but are private and secret. The rites are normally only discussed with children, and then only during the period when they are being initiated into these mysteries. I was able, however, to establish sufficient

rapport with the natives to examine these shrines and to have the rituals described to me.

The focal point of the shrine is a box or chest which is built into the wall. In this chest are kept the many charms and magical potions without which no native believes he could live. These preparations are secured from a variety of specialized practitioners. The most powerful of these are the medicine men, whose assistance must be rewarded with substantial gifts. However, the medicine men do not provide the curative potions for their clients, but decide what the ingredients should be and then write them down in an ancient and secret language. This writing is understood only by the medicine men and by the herbalists who, for another gift, provide the required charm.

The charm is not disposed of after it has served its purpose, but is placed in the charm-box of the household shrine. As these magical materials are specific for certain ills, and the real or imagined maladies of the people are many, the charm-box is usually full to overflowing. The magical packets are so numerous that people forget what their purposes were and fear to use them again. While the natives are very vague on this point, we can only assume that the idea in retaining all the old magical materials is that their presence in the charm-box, before which the body rituals are conducted, will in some way protect the worshipper.

Beneath the charm-box is a small font. Each day every member of the family, in succession, enters the shrine room, bows his head before the charm-box, mingles different sorts of holy water in the font, and proceeds with a brief rite of ablution. The holy waters are secured from the Water Temple of the community, where the priests conduct elaborate ceremonies to make the liquid ritually pure.

In the hierarchy of magical practitioners, and below the medicine men in prestige, are specialists whose designation is best translated "holy-mouth-men." The Nacirema have an almost pathological horror of and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is believed to have a supernatural influence on all social relationships. Were it not for the rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their gums bleed, their jaws shrink, their friends desert them, and their lovers reject them. They also believe that a strong relationship exists between oral and moral characteristics. For example, there is a ritual ablution of the mouth for children which is supposed to improve their moral fiber.

The daily body ritual performed by everyone includes a mouth-rite. Despite the fact that these people are so punctilious about care of the mouth, this rite involves a practice which strikes the uninitiated stranger as revolting. It was reported to me that the ritual consists of inserting a small bundle of hog hairs into the mouth, along with certain magical powders, and then moving the bundle in a highly formalized series of gestures.

In addition to the private mouth-rite, the people seek out a holy-mouth-man once or twice a year. These practitioners have an impressive set of paraphernalia, consisting of a variety of augers, awls, probes, and prods. The use of

b) The idea behind the text is that Miner is actually writing about Americans (Nacirema backwards is American). He's actually describing the medicine cabinet, going to the dentist and brushing our teeth.

→ Now, talk about the importance of context: how many figured out the meaning of the text without knowing it?

Lesson 2: From the beginning

Most students struggle with an empty paper and find it hard to begin writing. The following tasks aim to remove this barrier and encourage students to start writing without further hesitation.

First things first

Read words aloud to your students and ask them to write down the first three words that come to mind when they think of the word you read. For example, a summer cottage: *a sauna, a lake, a family.*

Scene one, take two!

Students, in groups or in pairs, choose at least three of their favorite movies. Then, ask them to write a short paragraph/opening sentence which would be read by a narrator in the beginning of one of the movies. For example, if one chooses *Titanic*, the paragraph could be the following:

> "Sometimes, no matter how well you think you know yourself, your conscious thoughts can be just the tip of an iceberg. And sometimes you might need a helping hand to realize what lies beneath the surface. That's what happened to me, at least." – Read by *Rose*

About beginnings...

a) Students compare the following beginnings and choose which one appeals to them most, and why:

- "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." – *Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice*

- "If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents

were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth." – *J. D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye*

- "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." – Tolkien, *The Hobbit*
- "Not for the first time, an argument had broken out over breakfast at number four, Privet Drive." – J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and The Chamber of Secrets*

- "There is one mirror in my house. It is behind a sliding panel in the hallway upstairs. Our faction allows me to stand in front of it on the second day of every third month, the day my mother cuts my hair." – Veronica Roth, *Divergent*

b) What is the task of an opening sentence? Have a conversation about the possible ways of catching a reader's attention.

Muting for ideas

Use a short clip from a movie or a television series for this task. Show the clip for your students and put it on **mute** – the idea is that they'll see a soundless scene. I've used the following clip multiple times myself: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxQvl4AlwoY

a) Students watch the scene a couple of times and make notes of their first ideas – who is she, who is he, what are they arguing about? (Example questions for the clip I use)

b) Afterwards, students work in groups and try to come up with a background story to the clip. If there's time, they can practice writing some of it down. The main idea, though, is to get them inspired and to get their ideas flowing.

Lesson 3: Constructing sentences

A focus on sentence structure affects the fluency of one's texts.

Re-sentencing

Students take out the "click-headlines" they searched earlier and think of ways to alter them to be more informative. Afterwards, in groups, students choose and present their top three click-headlines and have others guessing what the article might say. Then, they show their suggestion for a more informative headline.

Long way down

a) Ask one of your students to read the following passage out loud (or read it yourself):

> "In the loveliest town of all, where the houses were white and high and the elms trees were green and higher than the houses, where the front yards were wide and pleasant and the back yards were bushy and worth finding out about, where the streets sloped down to the stream and the stream flowed quietly under the bridge, where the lawns ended in orchards and the orchards ended in fields and the fields ended in pastures and the pastures climbed the hill and disappeared over the top toward the wonderful wide sky, in this loveliest of all towns Stuart stopped to get a drink of sarsaparilla." – E.B. White, *Stuart Little*

b) Students try to think of ways to make this long sentence clearer by turning it into several shorter sentences.

Lesson 3: Paragraphs

Paragraphs are a central tool for making a text easy to read.

Life without paragraphs

a) Students read this short text from *The Hunger Games*, by Suzanne Collins:

"The fish and greens are already cooking in stew, but that will be for supper. We decide to save the strawberries and bakery bread for this evening's meal, to make it special, we say. Instead we drink milk from Prim's goat, Lady, and eat the rough bread made from the tessera grain, although no one has much appetite anyway. At one o'clock, we head for the square. Attendance is mandatory unless you are on death's door. This evening, officials will come around and check to see if this is the case. If not, you'll be imprisoned. It's too bad, really, that they hold the reaping in the square – one of the few places in District 12 that can be pleasant. The square's surrounded by shops, and on public market days, especially if there's good weather, it has a holiday feel to it. But today, despite the bright banners hanging on the buildings, there's an air of grimness. The camera crews, perched like buzzards on rooftops, only add to the effect. People file in silently and sign in. The reaping is a good opportunity for the Capitol to keep tabs on the population as well. Twelve- to eighteen-year-olds are herded into roped areas marked off by ages, the oldest in the front, the young ones, like Prim, towards the back. Family members line up around the perimeter, holding tightly to one another's hands. But there are others, too, who have no one they love at stake, or who no longer care, who slip among the crowd, talking bets on the two kids whose names will be drawn. Odds are given on their ages, whether they're Seam or merchant, if they will break down and weep. Most refuse dealing with the racketeers but carefully, carefully. These same people tend to be informers, and who hasn't broken the law? I could be shot on a daily basis for hunting, but the appetites of those in charge protect me. Not everyone

can claim the same. Anyway, Gale and I agree that if we have to choose between dying of hunger and a bullet in the head, the bullet would be much quicker."

a) Students make notes and try to guess the paragraph division.

b) In groups or in pairs, students discuss the benefits of paragraphs. What did it feel like, reading a text with no paragraphs at all?

c) A correct answer is shown:

"The fish and greens are already cooking in stew, but that will be for supper. We decide to save the strawberries and bakery bread for this evening's meal, to make it special, we say. Instead we drink milk from Prim's goat, Lady, and eat the rough bread made from the tessera grain, although no one has much appetite anyway.

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Anyway, Gale and I agree that if we have to choose between dying of hunger and a bullet in the head, the bullet would be much quicker."

d) Which one did they like better, and why?

Little Red Riding Hood

a) Students try to piece together a familiar plot, for example, the plot of Little Red Riding Hood. It doesn't have to be exact; the main parts will do.

For example: Little Red Riding Hood has to take food to her sick grandma – she wonders off her path and runs into a wolf – the wolf goes off to see grandma, eats her and takes her place – Little Red Riding Hood wonders why grandma looks so different – the wolf eats her too – her dad comes to the rescue and guts the wolf

b) From this, students try to come up with a general plotline for any fairytale. Teacher can draw this on the board.

→ A problem appears, something that sets up the story – something unexpected happens – the problem is solved. For example, in Cinderella, the problem is her being unhappy, the unexpected is the prince/the ball/the glass shoe, and the solution is the shoe fitting her foot.

Plotlines

a) After this, students see that each genre has its own "plotline" which is its core element. Now, students are asked to think about the plotline of *arguing one's opinion*. Again, this could be drawn to the board.

→ Stating your opinion – backing it up – concluding your main points.

b) Students choose a topic and try to come up with a short paragraph which includes all three parts, even if they consist of a single sentence. For example, on *apples*:

"Apples are good for your health (statement). This has been proven by many doctors and scientists all over the world who conclude that an apple a day keeps the doctor away (backing it up). So, each and every one should eat apples each day, if they want to stay healthy (conclusion)."

For example:

- Dogs are/are not…
- Rap music is/is not…
- Eating meat is/is not…
- Playing videogames is/is not…
- Smartphones are/are not…
- Horror movies are/are not…
- Or choose one of your own!

Lesson 3: Linking devices

This sections aims to replace the overused "and".

Linking

a) Students play a game, in groups or in pairs, where they pick up one of the words and try to use it in a sentence. For example, although: "…although they did have some convincing evidence".

ALTHOUGH	AS LONG AS	EVEN IF	NOR	BUT
AND	UNLESS	BECAUSE	SINCE	WHEREAS
RATHER THAN	BOTH…AND	EITHER…OR	NOT ONLY…BUT	ALSO
BESIDES	FURTHERMORE	HOWEVER	IN ADDITION	FIRST…
OF COURSE	SIMILARILY	ON THE OTHER HAND	IN SPITE OF	ABOVE ALL
AFTER ALL	OR	WITH THIS IN MIND	GIVEN THAT	IN OTHER WORDS
INDEED	FOR EXAMPLE	IN GENERAL	ANOTHER KEY POINT	SURPRISINGLY
HENCE	FOR THIS REASON	IN CONCLUSION	ALTOGETHER	IN THE LONG RUN

b) What is the purpose of linking words? Students use the words from the game in exercise one and try to select a few examples for each purpose:

- Giving examples → for example
- Adding information → and, in addition, besides, furthermore…
- Summarizing → in conclusion, after all…
- Sequencing ideas → first
- Giving a reason → for this reason
- Contrasting ideas → but, however, although…

Tools

a) Students make a mind-map/a drawing/a list, whichever they prefer, of these linking words and add it to their portfolio.

b) An additional search is advised, since there are hundreds of these out there. Students are asked to search at least three synonyms/additional options for each of the purposes.

→ The easiest way to find these is to type “linking words” to Google and click “pictures”. Dozens of useful charts appear.

Lesson 4: Writing is communication

The aim of this section is to have students think about all the possible ways of getting one's message across, communicating with people who are not present at the moment, and of presenting one's ideas in the best possible way.

Aims

Students take out the second task they did for this course – pictures/a list of the texts they encountered during their day.

a) Students try to map out the communicative aims of each text, for example: a text message was sent to a friend to ask them something, the morning paper had news which reported current events, a commercial tried to make them buy something…

b) What would you expect to find in…

1. A news article
2. An argumentative text
3. A letter

→ A current event, a place where it's happening, the people involved…

→ An opinion, emotions, reasons…

→ A receiver, personal thoughts, an address…

c) Consider the previous genres again – what would you not expect to find in them?

Ads

a) Students choose a topic and design an ad-campaign, or a single ad, for it. This can be done on paper, on a computer, or it can be videotaped, whatever fits the group. To inspire ideas, students can talk about the commercial campaigns they've found to be funny and spot-on.

b) They present their work in class, in groups or in pairs.

c) Others will either give scores or oral/written feedback on **how well the ad managed to convince them, how well it was organized and how clear it was.** This is also a good time for discussing feedback and the constructive ways of giving it to others.

A creative Snickers-ad, from https://tinyurl.com/zv2reut

Lesson 4: Formality & tone

Tone = conveys our attitude toward our audience and our subject matter

A letter

a) Ask your students to write a short letter of complaint: they've received an item they ordered via the Internet, and when they finally open the package and test the product, it does not work. The letter should include a request for a refund. Again, a short chapter will do.

b) Now ask them to write a similar letter, but this time one that praises the product: they've received it and are extremely happy with it.

c) Next, ask them to circulate the words from their texts which express their feelings towards the subject.

Tone

How can you express tone in writing? In addition to vocabulary, have students think about the difference in tone in these sentences:

- You're really annoying sometimes. / You're *really* annoying sometimes.
- A dog can sometimes be called a hound. / A dog can sometimes be called **a hound**.
- Did you hear me? / DID YOU HEAR ME?
- It was decided a long time ago. / We decided it a long time ago.
- Melody, come outside. / Melody, come outside!
- She's such a cute puppy. / It's such a cute puppy.

→ Italics, bold font, CAPITALS, active/passive, exclamation marks, pronouns…

A speech

a) Students write a short toast/speech to their best friend to be made at their birthday party, with all of their mutual friends there celebrating with them.

For example: "Yet another year has gone by and here we are again – welcome, everybody! It's great to see you all here. Let's make this a night to remember, alright? And to the birthday girl – this is your day! Take time to relax and enjoy it because you deserve it! Happy birthday!"

b) Next, students write a similar toast/speech, but this time it's for their grandma's or grandpa's birthday with all their relatives. They can, of course, just alter the first text if it's more convenient.

For example: "Cheers to one of the greatest people I've ever met! You're such an amazing person for you have made it through every challenge that came to your life. You've been such a great inspiration to all of us. We love you dearly. Happy birthday, grandma!"

Formal vs. informal

a) Students try to think of examples of informal and formal texts and write them down.

→ An informal text could be a text message, a formal one an essay on an entrance exam.

b) Students make two mind maps: the other one with "formal texts" in the middle, the other with "informal texts". For example,

→ Formal texts are more complex, thorough, objective, have no abbreviations, use passive…

→ Informal texts resemble spoken language, are simple, more emotional, can address the reader…

Lesson 4: The concept of genre

Movie time!

a) Students have a small competition between groups of three of four and try to come up with as many *types of movies* as they can – Western, horror, romance… Subgroups also count, so they can list for example "romantic scifi movies".

b) Next, students pick out one genre, for example horror movies. Then, they create a short script for a typical horror movie:

For example: a man goes into a house, a murderer knocks on the door, the man runs upstairs, the murderer follows him, the man hides in a closet, the murderer finds him.

c) Students then act out their short scenes, or actually film them with a tablet or a video camera. These can then be shown in class.

Extra: a writer's block

This part of the package can be used at any point during the course. It can be used as a handout, or, students can fill in their own ideas.

IN CASE OF A "WRITER'S BLOCK":

1. Take a deep breath and step back from your paper. Staring at the blank paper will only make it worse – do something else, and come back later.

2. Find sources for inspiration – listen to your favorite music, scroll through some pictures, watch short video clips… Anything that inspires *you*.

3. If your feeling tired or irritated, take a shower, eat something and drink lots of water. Sometimes these simple actions can help you focus.

4. Read similar texts from other writers – their ideas and solutions can inspire you to get your next idea.

5. Go back to the basics – why are you writing this text, who is it for? What do you want to accomplish? Realizing your goals can help those words find their way to your pen.

6. Take a look at the space you're writing in – is it uncomfortable, or stressful? Find a space where you feel comfortable and relaxed.

7. Try writing something else. If you're supposed to write an essay, write a short letter instead. Focusing on a new text makes you worry less about the unfinished task.

8. Have a friend read everything you've got so far. They can give you tips on what they would expect or like to read next.

9. Read your text yourself, out loud. Hearing your own words can make you remember your point, or the things you wanted to say next.

10. If you're completely stuck, try writing down the following, by hand: "I'm stuck. I don't know what to write next. I should write something. Words go here. Words, where are you..." Sometimes this (writing down your actual thoughts) helps to relieve the stress of staring at an empty paper.

A cheat-sheet for process writing:

1. Getting to know a genre

2. Considering the goals of the writer

3. Having a model of the reader/the audience

4. Gathering ideas

5. Organizing ideas

6. Turning ideas into text

7. Reviewing what has been written

8. Editing

Lesson 5: A job application

Advice students to use the cheat-sheet provided above during the whole writing process. The empty spaces are reserved for notes, questions, thoughts & ideas.

The aim of this first section is to introduce a job application as a genre.

Outlines

a) What kind of a text is a job application? Have an open discussion about the elements student think should go into a job application. Gather these on the board.

b) Students read the following example applications and make notes of the parts they think are good and also for the things they feel are missing.

Example 1:

Dear Mr. Brown,

I am writing to you to apply for the position of an amusement park employee advertised on Duunitori.fi. As requested, you'll find my CV attached to this e-mail.

I find this opportunity highly interesting, as I've always wanted to work at an amusement park. I've been to the park thousands of times as a kid and I know my way around and have lots of knowledge about the rides there. I think I would make an excellent addition to your team and would provide an awesome experience for your customers in the park each and every day.

I have previously worked at the local grocery store as a helper and I have gained some experience of working with different customers. I'm a hard worker and I like to learn new things every day. Currently, I'm in high school, and am going to graduate next year.

I can speak English really well and also Swedish. I'm good with computers and I am a fast learner.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely, _____.

Example 2:

Dear Mrs. Black,

My name is Anna and I'm 18 years old. I'm writing to you for the job you advertised in Kouvolan Sanomat, the job for a babysitter.

I haven't worked with kids before, but I've got three sisters and I'm really good with them. I'm friendly, organized and responsible. I can also take care of dog, since we have a dog at home and I know how to take care of them.

I have a driver's license, I can speak English and Spanish.

I'd like to come to see you for an interview, you can reach me via email or call me, 050-1234 56 78.

Thank you,

_____.

c) Students (in pairs or in groups, if they want to) write down their ideas of this genre on the cheat-sheet. Have them describe the genre and the elements that it includes – what, for example, makes it a different genre from a letter?

Tell me a little bit about yourself

In pairs, students act out a scenario where one of them is an interviewer and the other one is looking to get a summer job (selling ice-cream, washing windows etc.). Have them "interview" for about 5 minutes, then change the roles. Use the following questions, if needed:

- Tell me a little bit about yourself.

- What made you apply for this job?

- What kind of experience do you have, previous jobs?

- Why should I hire you?

- What is your educational background?

- Any special skills?

Key words

In groups or in pairs, students gather adjectives they can use in an application when talking about themselves. They can write these in Finnish first, if needed (ahkera, täsmällinen, uuttera…) and then use a dictionary to write these down in English.

Goals & audience

a) Students look at the cheat-sheet again and fill out number 2, *goals of the writer*. The goal might be as simple as "getting a job", obviously, but it is important to write it down. In addition, they can consider what this means for the text – if the goal is getting a job, how does it affect the writing process?

b) Filling out number 3, *audience*. The audience for a job application will inevitably be the person or the people who are looking to hire – however, in addition to writing this down, students should think about the situation in which their future employer is reading the application. They can sometimes have hundreds or even thousands of applications to read, in a relatively short period of time.

→ What makes you stand out? Have students fill the *audience* part of the cheat-sheet with points which could make them stand out from the crowd of hundreds of other applicants.

Lesson 6: Gathering/organizing ideas

Next, students gather the key elements of a job application.

This is the job for me

You can provide your students an imaginary job announcement, but it might be most useful to let them use a job they've already applied to before, or a job they'd really like to have. This way, it will be easier for them to come up with the reasons for why they should be hired and why they'd be good for the job.

a) Students decide on the imaginary job they want to apply for. They gather ideas of the points they'd like to make in the application – this can be done by, for example, throwing a ball in pairs or in small groups. Throwing the ball back and forth has them actually "throwing ideas around".

This is me

a) In pairs, students try to describe themselves to their partner for 2 minutes. Have a clock at hand – the time restriction makes them summarize the most important points. Repeat this exercise multiple times, as the time can feel very limited at first. After a couple of times, though, they'll have an idea of the key points they should mention about themselves in the application. They can fill these in in the cheat-sheet under *gathering ideas.*

b) As a follow-up, students try to describe their partner for the class in turn. This can help them realize that, since the employee probably has to read hundreds of applications, it's good to have a description which is memorable.

A sketch

Students make (or draw) a rough sketch of a job application. They've considered the different elements that ought to be included and now they can consider the order in which they could be presented in. A drawing or a sketch of a headline, the paragraphs and an ending will do. Again, they can use the cheat-sheet for this.

Free writing

Allow students to write down sentences, words, ideas, or even a paragraph already. Encourage them to start from the parts that feel easiest – the beginning, a sentence to describe themselves, anything at all. This way, they'll have something to go on next time they pick up the pen.

Lesson 7: Ideas into text

Go!

Now, it is time to write. This can be done in class, or at home, whichever way fits the class schedule. However, it would be most useful to let students do at least some of the writing in class, since there they'll have peer support and the teacher at hand, if any questions or problems appear.

a) Students have made a sketch of the structure of a job application. Now, they take out that sketch and their notes, and start working on the first paragraph.

b) Remind your students that they'll have more time for reviewing & editing later on. The aim of this class is to create a "Draft 1".

Lesson 8: Reviewing & editing

First impressions

a) In pairs, or in small groups, students switch the first drafts of their job applications and read them. Advice your students to ignore all linguistic errors and mistakes at this point: the focus ought to be on the impression they as a reader get from the text.

b) Have them give feedback, orally or in writing. The feedback should focus on the overall impression: **was the text easy to read, did it make a good impression?**

c) After receiving feedback, students can review their own text and see which parts they want to keep and which ones could be altered. At this point, they might also have gained some additional ideas from their peers' texts.

d) Have a joint discussion of the feedback students gave each other. Again, it might be useful to write these down on the board. **Which features of the text caught their attention when reading?** Note that these can also be parts which they noticed to be really good.

e) Students will in the *rewriting* part of the cheat-sheet. Here, they can gather the main points other made after reading their text. This can be useful when they self-evaluate themselves and their development during the last class of the course.

f) Allow time for rewriting content.

Polishing

a) After rewriting, and creating Draft 2, have students once again exchanging papers. This time, however, focus on *editing*.

→ Use different colors for different points, for example:

- Red for errors in language (spelling etc.)
- Blue for vocabulary choices
- Green for sentences which sound odd or could be altered
- Pink for paragraph division and punctuation

b) Students will in the *editing* part of the cheat-sheet to see, which features generally called for editing.

c) Allow time for editing, i.e. polishing the text.

Lesson 9: An argumentative text

Next, an argumentative text is introduced as a genre through examples.

Debate

Students have a debate. Divide the group into two groups and have them choose three or four representatives who are to participate in the debate.

a) Students can choose a topic they are interested in or the teacher can provide one. One example could be a debate on whether students should always go out during recess, or if they could choose to stay indoors instead.

b) Give students about 15-20 minutes to prepare their arguments. Encourage them to make notes and to use dictionaries, if needed.

c) Arrange the debate. Have the observers make notes on the ways the debaters express their opinions: *in my opinion, I think* etc.

Have I caught your attention?

One of the key elements of an argumentative text is the opening paragraph – the one that catches the reader's attention.

a) Students think about their own reading habits and the texts that usually get their attention: on the other hand, which openings make them stop reading?

b) Students read the following opening paragraphs and discuss which one makes a better impression on them, and why:

Example 1 from https://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/cigarette-smoking-should-be-banned-BNFswruc:

If you had the chance to save your own life, or even the lives of everyone around you, would you take it? If you choose to light another cigarette, you are choosing to commit another murder and take another jab at your lungs. As the Center for Disease Control

and Prevention (CDC) states, smoking is the cause of “one in five deaths” each year in the United States alone. Since cigarettes can be considered a mass murder, they should be banned because they are dangerous to smokers and everyone around them, because that makes them vulnerable to second hand smoke.

Example 2 from https://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/the-ethics-regulations-and-history-of-medical-animal-testing-jfIoVbQZ:

A highly controversial, and not relatively new, argument of utilizing animals in the testing and development of medical research has left scientists at the crossroads of the ethnics behind the entire operation. Approximately twenty-six million animals are used in the United States each year for both scientific and commercial testing. These research animals become accessories for a wide range of dangerous procedures including the testing of the safety of medications for human consumption, determining the toxicity of medication, and ultimately develop stable medical treatments. Personally, my viewpoint lies in the middle ground as I am both the proponent of the positive products of research, and an opponent of not limiting suffering through the use of animals in the testing of medical research.

“Grading”

Next, students read a whole example text. Advise them to make notes while reading.

Example 1 from http://www.buowl.boun.edu.tr/teachers/sample%20student%20essays/GRADING.htm:

Grading

As students we all have been challenged to do our best. Throughout our lives we have been labeled with our grades; in high school, the ones with low grades were left alone in misery, while the ones with higher grades were praised as the leaders of this horse

race. Then, the question that comes into mind is: is it right to categorize students, does grading contribute to education?

It is assumed and stated in the philosophy of the current educational system that grading encourages learning and without it students would not study. That is far from being true and also expresses another flaw of our education system. The system is based on fear: the basic motive for students to study is fear of low grades. Furthermore, because the grades are the main criteria for passing courses, students do not study: they just develop methods of cheating. Thus, without learning the subject, they keep passing.

Since grades received in exams are more important than learning the subject matter, all students have to do to pass their courses is memorize how a specific problem is solved. Without knowing why such a method is used, students cannot apply their ability to solve the problem to daily life. However, they pass exams without learning why, how or what of the matter.

Another disadvantage of grading is that grades of a student are not updated. That means the grades of a student for the first year of school will still be valid in the last year, whether his knowledge about the subject has improved or deteriorated. Considering all the factors that affect a student's exams and marks, even a small incident may have a great impact in the long run.

Apart from these problems, which can be virtually solved by optimizing and improving the grading system, the most important defect of the system cannot be repaired without changing the whole system. The grading system causes inequalities, superior-inferior relations, classifications and even conflicts. It may be maintained that societies of the modern world are structured on these basic principles, but the fact that something exists does not justify it. Moreover, the people grown up in such an education system will not be able to see the other side of the walls, or will be afraid even to take a glimpse.

To sum up, grading students is not a good practice and should be abolished. It is clear that education, especially education during childhood, has a great effect on one's life.

And if you bring the children up in conditions of conflict and competition, they will look for conflicts in the future too.

a) Students either make notes or discuss the following questions:

- What is the writer's main argument?
- How does the writer introduce the topic?
- How does the writer support their arguments?
- What do you think of the last paragraph?
- What do you think of the overall tone of the text?
- Do you agree or disagree with the writer?

Basic elements

From the example, students draw a conclusion of the basic elements of an argumentative text. Once again, hand out a copy of the cheat-sheet and ask them to fill in number 1.

→ Presenting your topic and your take on it, presenting arguments and counterarguments, concluding.

Versus

Next, it is time to think about the possible topics. As a warm-up, ask your students (in pairs, groups or together) to state their opinion about…

- Cats vs. dogs
- Owning a car vs. walking or cycling to places
- Staying up all night vs. waking up early in the morning
- Coffee vs. tea
- Listening to music while studying vs. needing silence
- Acceptable pizza toppings
- Etc.

e) As homework, as your students to write down three possible topics for the argumentative text they are about to write. Advise them to look for ideas on the news, their everyday lives or the lives of others.

Lesson 10: Goals, audience & fluency

Sharing is caring

Allow students to share their ideas in small groups and decide which their topic is going to be. If they are struggling, they can get ideas from others. Have a list of possible topics at hand, though, just in case.

Goals

When writing an argumentative text, it is most important to have a clear goal in mind. Ask your students to think about their goals – what do they want to achieve by their text?

If, for example, one writes a text about the downsides of owning a car and polluting, the goal could be to get people excited about walking and cycling, etc. Now, students choose one task (or more, if there's time) from the following:

- Imagine that someone is writing a news article about the outcome of your text. Write down a possible headline for that article/those articles. For example, "More and more people choose walking over driving – on the road towards a cleaner environment".
- Draw a picture of the outcome of your text. For example, a picture of a street without any cars, with lots of people walking and cycling.
- In groups, create a small play of the outcome. It can be a short conversation, for example, between two people, during which the other one realizes that they don't need their car.

b) Students take out their cheat-sheet and write down their goal/goals.

Audience

a) First, have a joint discussion about the possible platforms where these types of texts could be published. Newspapers, blogs, websites, magazines?

b) Have students create a reader profile of two types of possible readers: one that could agree with their topic, and one who could get irritated of offended by their text. Next, students create a reader profile for these two types. They can use technology or pen & paper for this, but the idea is to have some sort of picture (from the Internet or from magazines etc.) in the middle and then some characteristics of the reader around it.

For example, for the agreeing type: a picture like this, with comments along the lines of "loves to cycle", "athletic", "interested in the environment", "knows facts about the benefits of cycling" etc.

c) Again, if your students are up for it, a small play could help them visualize their audience. In small groups, students choose someone's topic and create a small play, starring a possible reader and centering around their expected reactions.

d) Students take out their cheat-sheet and fill in *having a model of the reader*, describing the people who are probably going to read their text.

The how-to

Students have previously thought about the importance of paragraphs in a text. Now, they are to see the traditional structure of a paragraph when writing in English.

a) For this, we are going to use one paragraph from the example text "grades" (lesson 9):

> "It is assumed and stated in the philosophy of the current educational system that grading encourages learning and without it students would not study. That is far from being true and also expresses another flaw of our education system. The system is based on fear: the basic motive for students to study is fear of low grades. Furthermore, because the grades are the main criteria for passing courses, students do not study: they just develop methods of cheating. Thus, without learning the subject, they keep passing."

b) Now, ask your students to find the following parts:

1. A topic sentence/a statement
2. Arguments/counterarguments
3. Conclusion

→ "It is assumed and stated in the philosophy of the current educational system that grading encourages learning and without it students would not study (topic sentence). That is far from being true and also expresses another flaw of our education system. The system is based on fear: the basic motive for students to study is fear of low grades (argument 1). Furthermore, because the grades are the main criteria for passing courses, students do not study: they just develop methods of cheating (argument 2). Thus, without learning the subject, they keep passing (conclusion)."

Linking

Students have already practiced making use of different linking words. Now, it is time to search for other methods of linking.

a) Students can, once again, throw around a ball, or have a competition-like setting: the goal is to come up with synonyms for the word *money*. Cash, dollars, capital, fund, bucks, coin, riches, pesos… You can also use another word.

b) Another way of linking is *signposting language*. This can be practiced via the "alien-game". In pairs, one of the students pretends to be an alien from space. They have been observing earth for quite a while now and know all the basics, but still don't understand many of our actions. They ask the "human" questions and the human explains in detail, for example…

- How to use a printer
- How to bake a cake
- How to drive a car
- The school system
- How to go grocery shopping
- Anything you can think of!

The main idea is to remember that the alien is allowed to ask detailed and obvious questions. For example, an explanation of grocery shopping could go as follows:

Human: So first, you go into the store…

Alien: How do I know what a store looks like?

Human: Well, you usually recognize it due to its name.

Alien: Okay. What do I do then?

Human: Well, first you go inside, and then you…

Alien: How do I know where to go?

Human: Well, you look for these small gates which open when you get close to them.

Alien: Okay, then what?

Human: After you've found the gates, you go in, and then you take a basket for your groceries.

→ *Signposting language helps the reader to see what is going to be said, what has already been said, and the relation between the points presented.*

c) Colon or semicolon? Punctuation can help students navigate towards fluent linking skills. Which one would they use for the following sentences?

- Finally, I knew what it was___ a mouse.

- In 1992, our town had barely 1000 habitants___ ten years later, over 1500.

- I was indeed very nervous___ it would be my turn next.

- A snowstorm continues to surround the airport___ consequently, all flights have been cancelled.

- We had three options___ tea, coffee or water.

- High school students can leave the school area during lunch___ upper secondary school students must stay in the area.

d) Another way of linking is to rephrase one's own words, i.e. to refer to earlier parts of the text. One can use phrases such as "as stated above" or "as noticed earlier on" and can indeed rephrase their own words:

For example: Green apples are the best → As I noticed earlier on, red apples are okay, but the green ones are a clear winner in my eyes.

Students can look around and come up with simple sentences such as "the sun is shining" or "I am incredibly hungry right now", and their pair tries to come up with a rephrased sentence beginning with "as I noticed early on" (for example).

Lesson 11: Gathering and organizing ideas

Facts

a) Depending on the subject, argumentative texts almost always have some facts in them. It would be most useful, thus, to let students search the Internet for information on their topic. Remind them to pick their sources wisely.

b) Students gather ideas on their topic by "interviewing" others. You can, for example, have half of the students be interviewers while the other half, sitting opposite them, are being interviewed. After a few minutes they change roles, and after this they can change pairs by moving everyone, for example, one chair to the right. The interviewer asks what the other one thinks of their topic, for example, "so, how do you feel about global warming?". The key is that they do not reveal their own take on the subject, but just gather ideas from the points the person being "interviewed" makes.

Arguments

Next, students make a list of their main arguments. As a counterpart, they make a list of the counterarguments that could be made against their points:

My argument	Counterargument

Order

a) Have students write down their topic sentences (i.e. their main points) + the words “opening” and “conclusion” on small pieces of paper. Then, ask them to consider the order in which they want to present their points and to organize the pieces of paper accordingly. Seeing the points on paper might help visualizing the overall structure of their text.

b) Students then present their order to their pair (or to a small group), explaining that they are going to *start with this, then move on to this, and then continue on this…*

Lesson 12: Ideas into text

Go!

Now, it is time to **write**. Remind your students to have the cheat-sheet at hand and to ask for help, if they feel lost at any point during writing. Also, remind them to use the handout for a writer's block, if needed.

Lesson 13: Reviewing

Now, it is time to review what your students have got so far, text wise.

First impressions

a) Students exchange papers with their pairs or inside their small group. During the first round of reading, feedback should focus on the overall impression. Advice students to focus on the following points and if possible, use different colors for each point:

- Blue for vocabulary choices

- Green for sentences which sound odd or could be altered

- Orange for points which seem irrelevant or vague

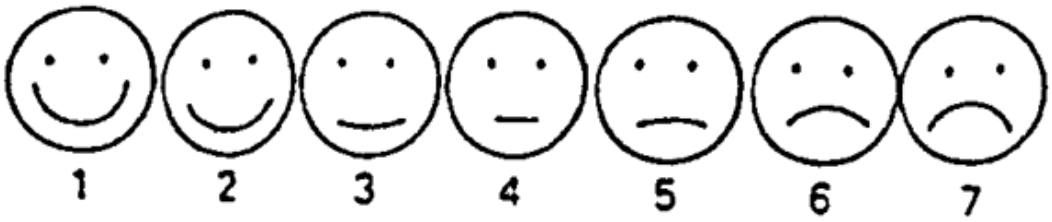
b) Ask students to look through the contents of their peer's text once again and **count all the different points (arguments) they make.** The point of this is to look for repetition: ask them to circulate points which are repetitive while counting the ones that are new and different.

c) Ask students to then **underline the topic sentences** of each paragraph.

d) At this point, it would be most useful for students to give oral feedback to each other. This ought to be done by emphasizing the points and parts which they liked or found interesting, since the parts which need to be altered have already been marked.

On a scale from...

a) Once again, have students thinking about their reactions as a reader and thus to consider the overall tone of the text they just read. Have them use the following scale and color in their own feelings after reading the text, and also the mood they thought the writer was in while writing their arguments? The writer can then use this to see whether their text aroused the desired emotions in the reader and whether their own attitude towards the subject came across as planned.



b) After getting their own papers back, students are asked to try and remember the key points their peer made in their text. The point of this is to find out whether the text had a clear order of presentation – did it move fluently and sensibly from one point to another?

Take two

Now, it is time to rewrite.

a) Students take out their cheat-sheet and fill in the part for *rewriting.* Here, they can gather the main points they got from the feedback, i.e. vocabulary needs changing or the conclusion wasn't clear enough. This can be useful when they self-evaluate themselves and their development during the last class of the course.

b) Reserve time at the end of the class for students to rewrite some parts of their text based on the feedback they just received. Remember to emphasize a focus on *content.*

Lesson 14: Editing

After rewriting content, it is time to edit or polish the texts.

Polishing

a) This time, after switching papers, students can use

- Red for errors in language (spelling etc.)

- Pink for paragraph division and punctuation

b) Next, students underline all **linking devices and signposting language**, i.e. the little words and phrases which make the text fluent to read. They can also underline the parts which seem to lack such a device.

Lesson 15: How do we feel about writing now?

Now, at the end of our course, it is time to take another look at writing.

Word art

a) Recreate the word art task from lesson 2: students make word art of their feelings towards writing now. Easier, more clear, enjoyable? These can be added to the portfolio.

b) Students list at least one good experience from the course, and one experience which possibly had them struggling.

Strengths and weaknesses

Students fill in the following columns, listing their strengths and weaknesses as a writer (to be added to the portfolio):

A letter to the future

Students write a short letter to future students who might take the same course. What would they have liked to hear in the beginning of this course? Ask students to give them advice and encourage them. This letter can be attached to the portfolio, but also serves as feedback for the teacher.

Additional exercises / a teacher's cheat-sheet

1.

If there's extra time, or some of the students are faster, they can do free-writing or write a fictional piece of text. These texts can be mutually agreed as extra points, or just as extra practice for those who are faster with their writing. The idea behind free-writing is to just start writing about anything, whereas fictional writing can be a fairytale or a short story, for example.

2.

Look for inspiration in pictures, music or peculiar objects. Bring a spoon to class and ask them to write something about it; show them a set of pictures for inspiration; or ask students to share their inspirational songs with others and to write freely while listening.

3.

Ask students to bring a text which has inspired them to class – it can be anything from a Facebook status update to a book. They can then present their different texts and share the reasons behind their choice – why is it inspirational? Is it particularly funny or witty? Did it make you realize something?

4.

Cut out words from newspapers, magazines etc. and hand a few of these to each student. Ask them to write something that includes a word/words you've given them. A poem, maybe, or a short paragraph.

5.

Ask your students to write a letter to the future or to the past - to themselves when they were 10 years old or when they are going to be 30.