THE METHODS OF DEVELOPING CREATIVE WRITING SKILLS

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Annotation: Teaching students to produce a successful written text is a complex task which requires simultaneous control over a number of language systems as well as an ability to factor in considerations of the ways the discourse must be shaped for a particular audience and a particular purpose. Teaching students to become successful writers is no less a complex task. But it can be a tremendously rewarding one as well.

Key words: teaching, organize, pre-writing activity, effective, students, useful.

There are a lot of techniques to teach writing. One of them is using mind maps. Using mind maps is effective to develop writing. Mind maps can be used for a multitude of purposes. They can effectively be used to help support and develop students' writing skills. A mind map1, or spider gram, is a strategy for making notes on a topic, prior to writing. It is a structured strategy, which shows the (hierarchical) relationship of ideas, as opposed to an unstructured strategy, such as brainstorming, in which students produce notes at random on paper. Having an organized display of information from the outset of the writing process may help some students, as it is more easily converted into a draft, whereas in brainstorming, the random recording of ideas might lead to problems with the structure of students' texts. Making a mind map should be a spontaneous pre-writing activity. Students start with a topic at the centre and then generate a web of ideas from that, developing and relating these ideas as their mind makes associations. Mind maps work well as their visual design enables students to see the relationship between ideas, and encourages them to group certain ideas together as they proceed. Mind

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maps work especially well when created in groups, since the discussion this engenders aids the production of ideas, and makes the task livelier and more enjoyable. The procedure for organizing mind map is the following:

Traditionally, students are given a topic to write on by the teacher. However, with certain classes, students may prefer to nominate the topic themselves. This can lead to greater interest in the task on the part of the student, as well as, perhaps, greater knowledge of the topic under study. The mind map strategy can be used to explore almost any topic, though discursive essays and narrative work particularly well as they front students' ideas and lend themselves to discussing ideas in groups. For instance, choose a discursive essay with the title "Why do people start smoking?" In this genre the language is used to give reasons and explanations. The discursive text is useful in highlighting this feature of English, and in raising awareness of the noun phrase, a particularly tricky area for intermediate students.

Close their eyes and think about it for a minute or two, in silence. They then have two minutes in which to note down their ideas. If they do not know a word in English, they can write it in L1 at this stage, as dictionaries or too much teacher intervention tend to halt and inhibit the creative flow. Then, working in groups, they can compare and discuss their ideas, perhaps adding to their mind maps as they go. This stage also provides the opportunity for peer teaching, as other students may be available to provide the English word for the idea that was noted down in language.

The next stage, in which the teacher makes a collective mind map on the board, is optional, but is useful for students who are new to the idea of mind maps, or for weak classes. It is also in this feedback stage that any remaining language problems can be ironed out. As the teacher elicits students' ideas, and reformulates expressions or corrects, students will learn how to express their ideas in English. Such personalization is said to aid vocabulary learning. The map is fluid and

changeable, and new connections or subgroups can be made, or branches added, as the students make suggestions. The end result should be an organized display of information, showing the central topic, and a number of subtopics and further points that stem from it.

In the next stage the students organize their mind maps into a linear format to decide the best way in which to present their points. They should first think about the overall structure, i.e. the order in which to relay the information, and then focus on the precise function each paragraph will have in their final text, as this helps to clarify their writing. This can be done in groups, or as a class with the teacher leading the discussion. However, it is carried out, it is important to provide a context and audience. I told my class, who were writing about drugs, that they were writing for their college magazine. Having an audience in mind helps students to decide which ideas are most important, and also helps students to choose the appropriate style.

Students should then begin to write their compositions, working in pairs if they wish. After two paragraphs, they should exchange their compositions, so they become readers of each other's work. This allows for feedback, and possible re-writing. Once they have finished, they should again exchange their texts. This gives their texts a communicative purpose, as well as developing an awareness of the fact that a writer is always producing something to be read by someone else, rather than for the display of writing alone.

Once students are familiar with the idea of making mind maps, they can be encouraged to use this skill for further writing activities. It is a useful technique and often improves the clarity and organization of student texts.

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