

Ms.Dina: “Best practices in teaching English” is a series of teacher training segments dealing with eight topics: **Classroom Management, Writing, Reading, Listening, Presentation Skills, Practice, Error Correction, and Supervision.**

“Best practices in teaching English” can be used for teacher and supervisor in-service training or by faculty in pre-service teacher education. Also, tapes can be used separately by student-teachers, teachers, and supervisors for individual study and self-development.

Accompanying the video series is a set of printed supplementary materials that describes the content and includes information of how to use the videotapes.

Thinking then Writing.

Dr. Ola Hafez: In the traditional writing class, the teacher writes the topic on the board and asks the students to write on it. At the end of the session, the teacher collects the compositions and takes them home to mark. When marking them, the teacher spends a lot of time over every single language error. When the teacher gives them back to the students, all they do is just glance at the grade and put the paper aside, not looking at any of the marking done. In a good writing class, writing should be taught for real communication. The teacher should give the students a reason why they're writing on the assigned topic. Later on, when they start writing, they feel they are writing to a real audience because they get feedback from their peers, their classmates. In this way can enhance student interaction and enjoyment. In addition, the most effective way to teach writing is as a process. It's a slow activity, taking students through the different stages of writing, helping them generate ideas, select and arrange these ideas, and finally revise them. Now we're going to see Mr. Ashraf Moustafa taking his students through the different stages of the writing class.

Mr. Ashraf: Good morning.
Students: Good morning, Mr. Ashraf.
Mr. Ashraf: Thank you. Sit down.
Students: Thank you.
Mr. Ashraf: How are you today? Fine?
Student: Fine.

Warm -up

Mr. Ashraf: Good. Uh...First today I want to ask you a question. Have you ever been abroad? Has anyone here ever been abroad—outside Egypt? Amira, you have ever been abroad?
Amira: ah...Ordon (Jordan.)

Ashraf: Jordan. Yes. Thank you.
Yes, Bassant?
Have you ever been abroad?

Bassant: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: Where?

Bassant: Canada.

Mr. Ashraf: Canada. She has been to...?

Students: Canada.

Mr. Ashraf: Thank you. Sit down. So I want to ask you now. Do you all like trips?

Students: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: You all like trips? You all like going out?

Students: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: Egypt, to see wonderful places?

Students: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: Right. So now imagine that you are going on a trip. Where would you like to go? Where would you like to go?
Hadir, stand up please. Where would you like to go?

Hadir: France. France.

Mr. Ashraf: Yea. Thank you. Sit down.
Where would you like to go, Nada?

Nada: I would like to go Britain.

Mr. Ashraf: Britain. Thank you. Who else? Rana?

Rana: Nitherland. Netherlands.

Mr. Ashraf: Where would you like to go?

Rana: Netherlands.

Mr. Ashraf: Thank you. Hadir?

Hadir: I'd like to go to Hong Kong.

Mr. Ashraf: Hong Kong! Thank you.
For those..I mean, let's say... for those who chose Britain....
Who chose Britain here?

Mr. Ashraf: Oh, Heba and Nada. Heba, stand up please?
Uh...What do you think you are going to do when you go to Britain?

Heba: I want to... ah, going to work with some... I want to friend... have friends and to play with them.

Mr. Ashraf: Yes. Thank you. Thank you. Heba?
What else can you do in England?

Heba: First I will study.

Mr. Ashraf: You want to study?

Heba: Study. And I want to visit everything there.

Mr. Ashraf: Oh. Okay. So there are certain places you'd like to visit, like...?

Heba: Big Ben.

Mr. Ashraf: Big Ben. Thank you. For those who chose France... let's say France.
Where do you like to go in France? What place would you like to visit there and see? Suzan?

Suzan: See Louvre Museum...ah... the peoples, and to have some friends and study there.

Elicitation

- Mr. Ashraf:** Thank you. Ah,... so now, walk...while you're on a trip, while you're outside
Egypt, sometimes you are alone. Other times you are with your friends or your family. When you are abroad and you want to be in touch with your family or with your friends, what do you think you are going to do?
You want to be in touch with them, to tell them your news-- what happens to you. What are you going to do? You're abroad, and what are you going to do? Ingy?
- Ingy:** I will write to them a letter.
- Mr. Ashraf:** A letter. Thank you. What else can you do? Alyaa?
- Alyaa:** To speak with ... to speak with them in the net.
- Mr. Ashraf:** Net. You use the net. Very good. Thank you.
What else? Yes, Donya?
- Dunya:** If I can phone them.
- Mr. Ashraf:** You can phone them. Great! Thank you.
What else? Yara?
- Yara:** To send to them a post card.
- Mr. Ashraf:** To send them a post card. Great!
So today let's concentrate and talk about one of the...of these methods that we can use to get in touch with our friends. It means a post card.
You know the post card. This is a post card.
- Dr.Ola:** He started with topic elicitation approaching the topic from a distance and got the students to produce the word "post card" themselves. He thus help them to see the topic in context.
- Mr. Ashraf:** Can you all see?
- Students:** Yes.
- Mr. Ashraf:** Good. Mm...I'll tell you something about one of my friends. He likes going abroad
and on trips. While... now he is abroad, and he sent me this post card. My friend says:

Reading

*" Dear Ashraf, I'm visiting a very nice place. I have a lot of fun in here. We went to the Great Wall yesterday. It was lovely. I bought some electronic equipment. They were very cheap, and I got you a calculator. I enjoy their food, especially rice, which is popular, and I like the way they eat it. What is noticeable here is that people are very short. I wish you can visit this place.
Love,
Adham"*

- Mr. Ashraf:** His name is...?
- Students:** Adham.
- Mr. Ashraf:** Yes. Can you know...and concen...can you guess where is he now? Yea.
Where is he? Yes. Alyaa?
- Alia:** In China.
- Mr. Ashraf:** China? Yeah. How do you know that he's in China?
- Alia:** Because the peoples in China is very short and visits the "Great Wall."

- Mr. Ashraf:** Yea. Can you tell me, please? How did he start his post card, how did he start the post card, Alyaa?
- Aliaa:** By "Dear Ashraf."
- Mr. Ashraf:** He said "Dear Ashraf." Thank you.
And how did he end it? How did he end it? Soha?
- Soha:** "Love, Adham."
- Mr. Ashraf:** "Love, Adham. Thank you. Do you think that. Thank you, Soha. Do you think he's a close friend of mine, or that we don't know each other?
Bassant?
- Bassant:** A close friend.
- Mr. Ashraf:** A close friend because he said ...?
- Students:** "Love, Adham."
- Mr. Ashraf:** Love...Yes. Thank you.
And I want you to think about the tenses he used here. What tenses did he use here? Hala?What tenses did he use here?
- Hala:** Past simple tense.
- Mr. Ashraf:** Okay. Can you give me an example?
- Hala:** Ah,...I bought Ah, I bought to the greet...(laah)..."We went to the Greet Wall yesterday."
- Mr. Ashraf:** Yes. Thank you. We went to the Great Wall yesterday. Do you want to say something? Nada?
- Nada:** The tense.
- Mr. Ashraf:** The tense. According to the past simple?
- Nada:** No.Present... Present continuous.
- Mr. Ashraf:** Present continues tense. What's the present continuous tense he used here?
- Nada:** "I'm visiting a very nice place."
- Mr. Ashraf:** I'm visiting a very nice place. Thank you. Who knows...Do you get this? Why did he use here this tense? Is it for an action that happened in the past or happening now?
- Dr. Ola:** After topic elicitation and before the students are ready to write, he prepared them through a reading given to them to focus them both on the ideas and the language. They looked at the tenses and appropriate vocabulary and structures.
- Mr Ashraf:** ..happened in the past, or happening now? Yes. Yes.
- Student:** It's happened but still happen now.
- Mr. Ashraf:** I'm visiting a very nice place, yes?
- Students:** It's happen now.
- Mr. Ashraf:** Yes.it's on Yes. An action...is on. Thank you. And what about the past simple tense which he said? "We went to the Great Wall". Is this action on or finished?
- Students:** Finished.
- Mr. Ashraf:** Right. Now I want you to work alone. You are going to write some ideas comes to your mind when you are writing a post card, like ...What ideas have come to your mind from here? Ok . Give me an example from the ideas when we read this post card? Fatma?
- Fatma:** Places.

Mr. Ashraf: Good. So now we are going to write some ideas. Thank you. We are going to write some ideas, like places and other things when we have a post card. You start now.

Dr.Ola: It's important to use this reading as a spring board, an aid and not a model to copy or imitate.

Mr. Ashraf: Now, pens down please. Pens down. Now, please. Have you all finished?

Students: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: In one minute, you and the person sitting next to you...You check the ideas together and you can add to your...to your ideas. Okay? You check it together. One minute.

Dr. Ola: Students should be ready to write the first draft either individually or in groups. They should start with a rough draft of their composition, focusing on the content, the ideas, and not worrying too much about mistakes at this stage.

Mr. Ashraf: Okay. Thank you. Yea... You have checked you...uh...what you have written together?

Students: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: Great! So now we have a lot of ideas about ...uh...the post ...the post card. Right? Who can give me some ideas we can write about on our post card here?
Sally?

Sally: Weather.

Mr. Ashraf: Thank you. Weather.

Net or Spider Graph

Student1: People.

Student2: Food.

Mr. Ashraf: Thank you. Good.

Student3: Civilization.

Mr. Ashraf: Thank you. Good. What else?

Student4: Shopping.

Mr. Ashraf: Thank you.Good. Shopping. What else? Nada?

Nada: Places.

Mr. Ashraf: Places. What else? Marwa?

Marwa: Museums.

Mr. Ashraf: Museums. Thank you. Good, Marwa.
That's good. Yes. We have a lot of ideas we can write in our post card. What we're going to do now is that we're going to work in groups. I'm going to give each group a post card to write about. But first what I want you to do is that in each group each one is going to write two sentences, two simple sentences about the place in the post card you have. You got the idea?

Students: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: Okay, we're going to write in groups, okay?
So we've two minutes after we...when we get this post card to write in our notebooks about this. You got the idea now?

Students: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: Fine. So what are we going to write now?

Students: Post card.
Mr. Ashraf: How many sentences?
Students: Two sentences.
Mr. Ashraf: Yes. Each one is going to work...?
Students: Alone.
Mr. Ashraf: Right. We have two minutes to do this.
Mr. Ashraf: Now, pens down. Pens down. Because just we are writing...just two sentences. Each one is writing two sentences. Please, now we are going to work in groups. These groups of four. You have already your post card. I'm going to give you cards. I'll give you a red card. This will be for the...?
Students: Presenter.
Mr. Ashraf: Yes, and you are having also the green card. This will be for the ...?
Students: The manager.
Mr. Ashraf: Then you have the secretary is the one is going to take notes. Also, you have the yellow card for the timekeeper the one who keeps time. Now I'm going to give you cards in groups. Now each group has a post card like this ...ah..? Right?
 The first draft you are writing a description for the place and other ideas that we discussed here about these people. You are having ten minutes to do this, okay? So what are we going to write now?
Students: A post card.
Mr. Ashraf: About the place you are having here. How much time are we going to take?
Students: 10 minutes.
Mr. Ashraf: Are we going to write on this post card?
Students: No.
Mr. Ashraf: So we are going to write it in our notebooks. So now, do you want this now?
Students: No.
Mr. Ashraf: Okay. I can have it and you can start. Go on.

First Draft

Mr. Ashraf: Yes, you can see. Yea.

Teacher Monitors

Dr.Ola: When the students have produced a first draft , they can move to the editing stage. First, they are giving the chance for self-correction. This should be selective, focusing on one language area at a time.
Mr. Ashraf: Now please, pens down. Pens down. You...you have finished?
Students: Yes.
Mr. Ashraf: Right. That's good. And now after we've finished this, this was the first step. As I told you before that you do not have to worry too much about this. Now we're going to write the second draft. But please, first you have two minutes in groups again. You have two minutes to check what you have written to...to check the sentences and the verbs. So you have two minutes to do this. Okay. Go on.

Peer Correction

Dr. Ola: After self-correction, students should be ready to get feedback from each other to share in the learning process. They now start to think of the compositions as directed to a real audience, their peers rather than a teacher as a figure of authority. This also helps them focus on how to communicate to real people, other than the obsessive fear of the teacher's red marks. Sharing with peers also helps the students learn from each other rather than regard the teacher and the book as the only sources of knowledge.

Mr. Ashraf: Now, yea...May I have your attention, please? You've finished checking your tenses? Right. And now I want you... I'd like you to re-write what you have written in your first draft here in the color card. I want you to re-write it in a good handwriting and good English, too. Right. Okay. You have five minutes to do this. So what are you going to write now?

Students: Post card

Mr. Ashraf: We write a post card in the color card, right?How much time do we have?

Students: Five minutes.

Mr. Ashraf: Yes. So go ahead. Make sure that the handwriting is big handwriting.

Editing

Mr. Ashraf: Yes. Now, please. Pens down. Pens down, okay? Good. Heba, pens down, please.

You all finished?

Students: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: Good. And now, let's enjoy your wonderful post cards, So let's first begin with this group.

Who is the presenter here? Bassant? Yes. Come on, Bassant, here.

Would you read your post card to the groups?

Bassant:

Dear Ingy,

How are you, our love?

We missed you so much. Here in this town all places are wonderful. It's has an interesting places. We visited a great palace yesterday. It's bigger than we expected it. Tomorrow we will go ...we will going to visit the big church. People here are so practical. They are beautiful, but they are firm.

The...This town is very big, and the weather is cold. Oh, we are freezing here! We feel homesick to turn back to you, our love.

Love,

Your friends,

Pousy, Hankousha, Suzy and Hadora.

Mr. Ashraf: This is good. Actually, I enjoyed it. You know which country and the place they are in? Who knows the place they are in? Who can guess it? Picture. Yes.

Alyaa, you know? Where...where are they?

Alyaa: Moscow.

Mr. Ashraf: They are in Moscow. How do you know that they are in Moscow?

Alyaa: It's a big town, and the people are practical and all time are work, and it has a big church.

Mr. Ashraf: You all agree with Alyaa that it's Moscow, or do you have another idea? Sit

down. Thank you, Alyaa. Yes, Heba?

Heba: Because Bassant said this is ...they are freezing here...there.

Mr. Ashraf: Yea. Freezing.

Heba: So it's Moscow. The temperature there is below zero.

Mr. Ashraf: Oh, yes. Thank you.
So you all agree that it's Moscow?

Students: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: Does any one here have another ideas?

Students: No.

Mr. Ashraf: No. Ok. Thank you. Thank you Bassant. And now let's hear from this group.
And who's the presenter here? Fatma? Come here, Fatma.
Nice post card.

Fatma:

Dear Klara,

Here I am in a very wonderful place. I have many friends. I went with my friends to a curvy Pisa Tower, and at Pizza... ate pizza. The tourist guide said that it is from the Seven Wonders in the World.

And he said that there are a famous cities, which called Vatican and Venecia.

That have a yarto bridge. They like to at pasta and pizza. The people here have tall nose and fair hair. I spend here ten days and I really don't feel home sick. Love, box.

Mr. Ashraf: Yes, who knows that? Which country is this?

Student : Mr!

Mr. Ashraf: Yes, Samar?

Sammer: Italy, because they

Mr. Ashraf: You think it's Italy? First, do you agree with her?

Students: Yes.

Mr. Ashraf: Does any one have another idea? Alaa?

Alaa: Italy.

Mr. Ashraf: Italy. How did you know that it's Italy, Alaa?

Alaa: Pisa Tower.

Mr. Ashraf: Pisa Tower. Thank you. What else, Samar?

Sammer: Because they eat pizza and...

Mr. Ashraf: Thank you. Pizza it's good. What else, Khlood?

Khlood: From the famous Seven World Wonders of the World.

Mr. Ashraf: Good. Thank you, Khlood.

Thank you, for Fatma.

That was great! Now I want you to give me your... I'm going to collect your post cards to enjoy reading them at home. I'd like to mark them, and tomorrow, "in shaa allah," we'll find them put in the wall outside. Because tomorrow morning you can read them outside the class, Okay?

Thank you very much.

Publishing

Dr. Ola: After such peer correction and when the students have written their best drafts, the teacher can collect these to mark and grade. Then he can select

the best two or three to put on the wall for the next two classes, or he can publish them in the class magazine.

That was a great class, don't you think? As you have just seen Ashraf has taken the students through the different stages of the writing class.

The teacher starts with topic elicitation, trying to help the students select the topic and see it in context. This is followed by brainstorming and reading in order to collect ideas. When the students have written in pairs or groups, then they can start revising their compositions.

The teacher starts with self-correction, helping the students to look at the composition, focusing on one area at a time. This can be followed by peer feedback—the feedback they receive from the classmates. Such feedback helps the students and the teacher in avoiding a lot of correction, which looks ugly to the students as it's all red, and it minimizes the teacher's marking load. When the teacher marks the compositions at the end, he can mark them focusing on one area at a time, thus making learning most effective.

Finally, the students can share their compositions if they see them published in a class magazine. In this way, writing can be seen as a continuous process of writing and rewriting.

Student involvement is thus maximized through the different stages of writing, self-correction, and peer feedback.

Such stages lessen the teacher's marking loads, and help the learners learn from each other. Additionally, by designing communicative tasks, the teacher can maximize the students' involvement and sense of audience, which help them a lot when they start writing outside the classroom for a real audience.

Reflection

Mr. Ashraf: When I showed my students the post card that I got for them, when I mentioned the name "Adham," they laughed ah,... or smiled. And this because of Adham is the name of my dear son. He is very little child. He's about six months. and in return... I do this to show my students... to make a rapport between me and my students-- to have friendship, and also to create some sort of fun inside the classroom. And in return, also, my students, when...when they wrote the post card, they addressed it to some persons who are absent...were absent in the classroom, like May--when they sent the post card to May. And also, when they signed the post card, they gave themselves funny names like Hankousha for Hind, or Pousy for Passant, Hadoura for Hadir, something like this. I asked my students to write in groups, and I think writing in groups gives them many advantages: First, to exchange ideas with each other, as I asked them first, before writing in-groups, to each one to write two sentences separately. Then, when they write in groups, they change their ideas. Secondly, to make a cooperation and to teach them how to cooperate together. Thirdly: I want them to be responsible... everyone to be responsible for his own work.

Number four is that writing in groups is safe for students. Sometimes in the classroom, especially in writing, I may face some challenges and problems with students.

One of these is like...some students do not want to write. I go to them , try to encourage them to write and try to give them a hint, a word or two, and then they complete the sentence. This way they have self-confidence and they go away and write.

Other challenges that sometimes students do not have any idea about the topic I'm giving to them. Like in this...the lesson when I gave the...the postcard, one of the groups had Moscow, and they didn't know anything about Moscow.

I encouraged them to talk about general ideas. What did they do at that time? They began to recall from their memories what they see in the TV and how cold is Moscow, and they began to write from memory some general ideas, not specific places, or specific habits, or customs for people, and this was good for them!