



Teaching EFL Writing in Montenegro: Teachers' Perceptions and Approaches

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Introduction

- ↓ Personal experiences teaching EFL writing
 - ← knowing a skill doesn't necessarily mean having skills to teach it
- ↓ Why research in EFL writing?
 - To explore experiences and give voice to Montenegrin EFL teachers
 - To narrow the research gap



Teaching EFL writing in Europe

- ↯ *Write to learn* vs. *learn to write* approach to writing pedagogy
- ↯ Theory vs. practice, adopting vs. adapting
- ↯ Efforts to reconcile curriculum with actual students' needs
- ↯ Should EFL teacher education programs more adequately prepare students for grappling with the factors that shape writing instruction?



What EFL teachers' have to say

Nothing essential has changed because of globalization. For the most part, it doesn't mean anything to the students. For us [teachers], it just means that we'll have to follow new directives from the Ministry [of Education] every time it decides to change something. That happens almost every year because of the European Union. Another change is that the kids play on computers a lot. They don't read any more. They don't value their own language, they plagiarize more. We're all learning Anglo-Saxon patterns of writing.

Becoming an EFL writing teachers

- Teacher education, PD opportunities, context and reflective practice shape teachers' perceptions of their role in the classroom, helping them to move from idealism to realism.
- Being vs. becoming: becoming a writing teacher does not occur in a void but is consisted of negotiating the social, institutional and historical context of teachers' work, and finally building their professional identities (Lee, 2010)

My Research Questions

1. How important is writing instruction in EFL context in Montenegro & how important is it for teachers to receive training in teaching writing?
2. What are the approaches to and practices of Montenegrin EFL teachers for teaching writing?
3. What are the Montenegrin EFL teachers' perceptions of their competence in teaching writing and is there a link between these perceptions and their approach to teaching writing?



Research Design

- Participants
- Methods of data collection
- Data analysis
- Findings



Professional training opportunities

Q	Survey questions	Answers			
Q5	How much do you think your teaching certification courses at the university were successful in providing you with necessary skills in teaching writing?	Extensively 3.5%	Adequately 44.4%	Inadequately 51.9%	Not at all 0%
Q6	How much field experience (observation and teaching) did you get during your university formal preparation for teaching writing?	Several weeks of lessons 25.9%	Several lessons 22.2%	One to two lessons 29.6%	None 22.2%
Q7	Do you feel that you should have received more field experience?	Definitely yes 40.7%	Yes 37%	No 22.2%	Definitely no 0%
Q8	How often do you have an opportunity to attend professional development activities on teaching writing (e.g. workshops, conferences, <u>webinars</u>)?	Every month 3.6%	Once per semester 7.4%	Once a year 59.3%	Almost never 29.6%
Q9	How often do you have an opportunity to discuss and learn more on teaching writing from another English teacher?	Every week 7.4%	Every month 14.8%	Once per semester 51.9%	Almost never 25.9%

Professional training impact

Q10	How much impact do the professional development activities on teaching writing have on influencing your practice?	High 18.5%	Moderate 70.4%	Low 11.1%	None 0%
Q11	Do you feel you got sufficient competence in teaching writing solely through your experience in teaching writing?	Definitely yes 0%	Yes 51.9%	No 48.1%	Definitely no 0%
Q12	How confident do you feel when instructing your students in writing?	I am confident in teaching writing 25.9%	I would feel more confident if I had more training/knowledge in teaching writing 48.1%	I would feel more confident if I had more class time 25.9%	I am not confident in teaching writing 0%

The importance of good EFL writing skills

Q14	In your opinion, how important is it for your students to have good writing skills in English?	Very important 70.4%	Important 22.2%	Somewhat important 7.4%	Not important 0%
Q16	How important are good writing skills in English for Montenegrin EFL students?	Very important 59.1%	Somewhat important 18.2%	Less important than other skills, like speaking or reading 9.1%	Important mostly when it comes to testing 13.6%

Approaches to teaching EFL writing

#Q	Option	Results (in percentages)
1	That of teaching writing in their L1 (traditional approaches in teaching writing in L1)	25.9%
2	Process approach (prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing)	40.7%
3	Product approach (focusing on grammatical and syntactical structures and imitating models)	33.3%
4	Genre approach (focus on specific audience and purpose)	44.4%
5	Grammar-translation approach (writing as a product of a translation task)	0%
6	Integrated skills approach (integration of all skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing)	29.6%
7	Task-based approach (the task creates a need to use language and write)	40.7%
8	Project-based approach (writing as a product of an authentic class research experience)	48.1%
9	Problem-based approach (writing as a part of problem solving activity)	25.9%
10	Communicative language approaches (realistic and relevant writing to communicate a message)	37%
11	Discovery approaches (invite learners to find the writing rules themselves)	11.1%
12	I mostly teach from the textbook	29.6%

Instructional practices used to teach EFL writing



Instructional practice	Percentage of teachers who mentioned it
Authentic, age appropriate topics, matching their interests, freedom of topic choice	37%
Raising awareness of the importance of good writing skills for their future	1.62%
Providing guidelines how to brainstorm, organize and write their ideas	1.08%
Support writing by giving prompts, discourse markers	0.5%
Examples, modeling good writing	0.5%
Games	0.5%
Grades	0.2%
Publishing	0.2%
Difficult	0.2%
Not insisting much on accuracy	0.2%
Assign writing tasks for homework due to the lack of class time	0.2%



More training on...

Option	Results (in percentages)
Teaching productive skills (speaking, writing)	81.8%
Teaching receptive skills (listening, reading)	40.9%
Creation and use of authentic language materials	63.6%
Use of social media in teaching English	45.5%
Multimodal approach to teaching (combination of text, audio and image)	50.0%
Self and peer assessment	45.5%
Task-based teaching/learning	45.5%
Project-based teaching/learning	36.4%
Use of L1 in the classroom	27.3%
Collaborative work	31.8%
Other (Assessment, assessment of writing (2))	11.1%

Findings

- ↴ Montenegrin EFL teachers use a variety of instructional practices for teaching EFL writing.
- ↴ Montenegrin pre-service & in-service EFL teachers would benefit from increased training in EFL writing pedagogy
- ↴ Micro context governs attitude to and instructional practice in teaching EFL writing



What can we learn from these findings?



Importance of...

- ↓ challenging assumptions & stereotypes
- ↓ teachers' awareness of the variety of professional contexts
- ↓ courses on EFL writing pedagogy in EFL teacher training programs
- ↓ helping ELs understand the importance of good writing skills
- ↓ PD opportunities for both pre- & in-service teachers



Conclusions

- ↴ EFL teachers need to be prepared to teach writing effectively in their specific contexts
- ↴ EFL teachers should not be left alone to deal with the challenges of making EFL writing more meaningful
- ↴ More research would contribute to increasing the understanding of writing instruction in local contexts and open the communication across borders

THANK
YOU