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Written expression for professional communication in the English language teaching-learning process of journalism students

La expresión escrita para la comunicación profesional en el proceso de enseñanza - aprendizaje del idioma inglés de los estudiantes de periodismo

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Abstract

Objective: The article aims to analyse and synthesise the main theoretical-conceptual conceptions on the teaching-learning process of written expression in English, focusing on its impact on the professional communication of journalism students.

Method: The research process involves both empirical and theoretical methods which form a dialectical unity and must be completed in the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the information. These methods enabled the theoretical-conceptual interpretation of written expression in the English language training process of university students, due to the professional demands that society poses to them in relation to their effectiveness in the use of written expression in professional environments which presupposes the improvement of communicative competence.

Result: A recapitulative study is offered on the main theoretical-conceptual conceptions on the teaching-learning process of written expression in English for the professional communication of journalism students.

Conclusion: In the professional field, written expression forms part of the skills required by current student and future professional, who must know how to write properly and effectively; it constitutes a training instrument, a means of access, a way of managing knowledge and approaching culture; it presupposes the improvement of communicative competence; it guarantees efficiency in their activity and promotes their greater integration in the professional community.

Keywords: written expression, professional communication, English language, teaching-learning process, journalism students.

Resumen

Objetivo: El artículo tiene como objetivo analizar y sintetizar las principales concepciones

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teórico-conceptuales sobre el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la expresión escrita en inglés para la comunicación profesional de los estudiantes de periodismo.

Método: El proceso de investigación involucra métodos tanto empíricos como teóricos que forman una unidad dialéctica y deben completarse en el análisis cualitativo y cuantitativo de la información. Estos métodos posibilitaron la interpretación teórico-conceptual de la expresión escrita en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés de estudiantes universitarios, debido a las exigencias profesionales que les plantea la sociedad en relación a su efectividad en el uso de la expresión escrita en contextos profesionales lo que presupone la mejora de la competencia comunicativa.

Resultado: Se ofrece un estudio recapitulativo sobre las principales concepciones teórico-conceptuales sobre el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la expresión escrita en inglés para la comunicación profesional de los estudiantes de periodismo.

Conclusión: En el ámbito profesional, la expresión escrita forma parte de las habilidades requeridas por los actuales estudiantes y futuro profesionales, quienes debe saber escribir de manera adecuada y efectiva; constituye un instrumento de formación, una vía de acceso, una forma de gestionar el conocimiento y de acercarse a la cultura; presupone la mejora de la competencia comunicativa; garantiza la eficiencia en su actividad y promueve su mayor integración en la comunidad profesional.

Palabras clave: expresión escrita, comunicación profesional, proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje idioma inglés, estudiantes de periodismo.

Introduction

The 21st century, an era characterized by the vertiginous progress and impact of science on development, the multiplication of scientific-technical information and knowledge, as well as by scientific, commercial and cultural exchange between different countries, demands from higher education new challenges in the training and performance of future professionals, so that they can be active, independent and creative participants in the socio-economic progress of their country in the face of the challenges of sustainable development.

In this sense, higher education worldwide flows as a trend towards a universalization of knowledge and internationalization, which require professional academic communication between specialists of different nationalities and, therefore, raise the need to enhance the development of communicative competence in a foreign language, with emphasis on English, the global *lingua franca*.

Consequently, the Ministry of Higher Education, as part of the improvement of the continuous

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training process of Cuban professionals, has proposed the policy for the improvement of the English language training process for students in Cuban higher education, which aims to achieve a B1 level in the development of communicative competencies in the language.

In this regard, the development of written expression in English for professional academic communication is of special importance, which is part of the professional competencies required of today's university students, given its procedural and systemic, communicative, interactive, reflective, developmental, metacognitive, and personological character, increasingly marked by the impact of information and communication technologies. Its development represents the highest level of linguistic learning as it considers the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic components in the text.

The analysis of the results of the factual diagnosis applied to first year journalism students revealed the following problematic situation regarding the development of written expression for professional-academic communication in the process of English language training.

- The treatment of writing is perceived mostly as a product and not as a process, with emphasis on the knowledge of grammar and appropriate vocabulary, above the cognitive process that leads to the elaboration, organization and presentation of ideas.
- Poor command of communication strategies by students that promote the development of written expression, according to the different discursive forms and in accordance with the communicative situation offered.
- Insufficient coherence and cohesion of meanings in the written text, in relation to the demands of the subject.

In accordance with this situation the article aims to analyse and synthesise the main theoretical-conceptual conceptions on the teaching-learning process of written expression in English, focusing on its impact on the professional communication of journalism students.

Methods

The determination of the methods and techniques to be applied during the research was based on the Marxist-Leninist philosophy which conceives, among other principles, that the research process involves both empirical and theoretical methods which form a dialectical unity and which must be completed in the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the information. In order to carry out this article, a bibliographic study was carried out based on the critical analysis of information contained in normative documents and materials from various sciences such as communication theory, philosophy, sociology, psychology, didactics and linguistics.

Results and discussion

Journalism is part of higher education curricula in most countries of the world. It is a profession

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that shares historically established theories and practices with a group of knowledge that is continually emerging within the changes and challenges posed by the current information society. It is precisely the characteristics of this context that have encouraged the conception of the journalist as a professional who, in addition to communicating reality through the written press, radio, television and digital media, has the responsibility to think about it, using transdisciplinary perspectives from communication theory, philosophy, politics, economics, sociology, psychology and other branches of knowledge.

As college graduates, they develop their professional activity essentially in the mass media: printed press, digital press, radio, television, information agencies, for which they produce informative content in its multiple and diverse expressions, although they can also work in teaching institutions or in communication offices, as part of transdisciplinary collectives for which they must be able to produce journalistic work in different languages and styles for the different media, whether in the written and printed press, digital press (web), radio, television and mobile devices, respecting deontology; manage, produce and socialise journalistic messages with the application of information and communication technologies; master the mother tongue in oral and written form, as a fundamental instrument in the performance of their professional activity, as well as a foreign language, with emphasis on English, the most widely spoken and used language in the world, especially in the field of communication.

In this respect, the written media have played an exceptional role in the dissemination of accurate and reliable information, and have become a pillar of information for investors, business people, academics and the general public, providing a beacon of knowledge that enlightens the events that shape the world in which we live. The seriousness, rigour and professionalism that characterise these media are not only their hallmark, but also the basis of the trust they inspire in their audience.

With the advent of the digital age, journalists have had to adapt to a constantly changing environment. The transition from writing for print media to working on online platforms has required additional skills, such as the ability to create multimedia content, interact with audiences on social media and understand the dynamics of online publishing.

The transformation of journalists into online communicators and their adaptation to new communication formats demonstrate their capacity to evolve and their continuing relevance in today's society where written production is of particular importance.

A lot has been written about written expression which has been considered a skill, a process a competence, and a language activity depending on the focus given to it.

González *et al* (2019), discusses teaching writing in English through a process-product approach oriented towards action. The approach described by González *et al*. represents a progressive and effective strategy for teaching writing in English. By integrating both the process and product of

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writing within an action-oriented framework, it prepares students not only to produce written texts but also to engage meaningfully with language as a tool for communication. While there are challenges to implementation, the potential benefits for student learning and engagement make this approach a valuable contribution to language education practices.

The National Evaluation Centre for Higher Education, (CENEVAL) (2023), emphasizes that written expression is a skill for quality professional academic life in the modern world.

From this viewpoint, information is shared at high speed through a variety of media and to serve its purpose it must be clear and effective. A repetitive message with limited vocabulary, lack of logic or inaccuracies can lead to disinterest, lack of trust and a negative image of the writer. Good writing skills can help students effectively express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions, and can contribute to greater success in their professional fields of action.

Berninger (2002) defined written expression as a linguistic skill which comprises the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic components in the text.

This definition emphasizes that effective writing is not just about grammar or vocabulary; it encompasses a broader understanding of how meaning is constructed through language. Semantic components relate to meaning, syntactic components pertain to sentence structure, and pragmatic components address the context and purpose of communication. This holistic view is crucial for both teaching and assessing writing skills. The framework provided by Berninger *et al*. (2002) allows for the identification of specific areas where students may struggle. By recognizing weaknesses in semantic, syntactic, or pragmatic skills, educators can tailor interventions to support individual learners more effectively.

Canale and Swain (1980) consider that written expression encompasses both linguistic knowledge and strategic competence.

This definition provides a holistic framework for understanding communication. By integrating linguistic knowledge (grammar, vocabulary) with strategic competence (the ability to use language effectively in various contexts), it underscores the complexity of writing as a skill that requires more than just knowledge of language rules. Recognizing the role of strategic competence highlights the importance of problem-solving in communication. Writers must navigate challenges such as miscommunication or lack of clarity, making it essential to develop strategies that enhance their ability to convey messages effectively.

Eryilmaz, A., & Yesilyurt, Y. E. (2020) define foreign language written expression as a developmental process that encompasses several cognitive sub-processes essential for effective writing.

This definition serves as a guide for teacher training programs by emphasizing the need for instructors to be aware of the developmental nature of writing. It encourages teachers to adopt

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instructional practices that support gradual skill acquisition and to provide appropriate feedback based on students' developmental stages.

This perspective emphasizes that writing in a foreign language is not a static skill but rather a dynamic process that evolves over time. It highlights the stages of writing development —foundation, expansion, development, and completion—allowing educators to tailor instruction based on learners' specific needs at different levels.

By framing writing as a developmental process, the model encourages a holistic approach to teaching. It integrates various aspects of language learning, including cognitive, linguistic, and contextual factors, thereby fostering a more comprehensive understanding of how students acquire writing skills in a second language.

These authors' framework emphasizes the following key components:
Planning: This initial stage involves setting objectives for the text, generating ideas, and organizing content systematically. Writers must think critically about what they want to communicate and how best to structure their writing.
Drafting: During this phase, writers translate their planned ideas into written form, adhering to the established structure and style. This requires a solid understanding of linguistic elements, including syntax and vocabulary.
Revising: The revision process is crucial for enhancing the quality of the writing. It includes checking for coherence and cohesion within the text, as well as ensuring grammatical accuracy and appropriate language use. Writers must critically evaluate their work to make necessary corrections and improvements.
Cognitive demands: The authors highlight that writing in a foreign language is particularly challenging due to the need for mastery over various language components and the cognitive load involved in managing these processes simultaneously.

Cultural considerations: The authors also note that cultural differences can impact writing quality, as they influence rhetorical styles and conventions in both the first language and the foreign language.

Latygina, N. A. *et al.* (2022), consider written expression a competence which refers to the ability to effectively use writing skills and knowledge, including grammar, vocabulary, organization, and style, to produce a well-written piece of composition. That is to effectively coordinate the various processes involved in writing in order to produce high-quality written work. (p. 45-56).

This definition of written expression provides a solid foundation for understanding this important skill. By refining its clarity and incorporating examples and the iterative nature of writing, it could serve as an even more effective guide for educators and learners alike. It acknowledges that writing is not only about producing a final piece but also involves revision and feedback processes. This dynamic aspect of writing is essential for developing effective written expression. It also

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encompasses language competence, writing competence, and cultural competence, which are all important elements in producing good, readable, communicative, and successful writing. This holistic view is crucial, as effective writing is not merely about correct grammar but also about how ideas are structured and conveyed.

As a competence, it is a fundamental part of the professional training process in any field of knowledge, because it goes beyond the mere technical ability to write correctly. It involves the ability to use writing as a tool to communicate effectively in different contexts and for different purposes. It also includes the ability to adapt the style and tone of writing to different audiences, to organise ideas logically and persuasively, and to convey information clearly and persuasively.

The authors of this paper assume the perspective of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2022), which defines written expression as a mode of communication encompassing various competencies and skills necessary for effective writing in a foreign language.

Written expression is part of communicative competence and is expressed through linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. These competences are necessary for the appropriate use of language in different contexts and under different conditions in order to carry out activities that involve processes for producing and receiving texts in different contexts and for different purposes, adapting register and style to the communicative situation, bringing into play the strategies that seem most appropriate for carrying out different tasks

This definition is well-rounded and insightful. It highlights the complex nature of written expression as a critical component of language proficiency, while emphasizing the importance of context, process, and cultural awareness necessary for effective communication in a foreign language.

This holistic view acknowledges that effective writing is not solely about grammar and vocabulary but also about conveying meaning appropriately based on the audience and purpose. It highlights the iterative nature of writing, which involves planning, drafting, revising, and editing. This focus on the writing process encourages learners to view writing as a developmental skill that can improve with practice and feedback.

During the process of learning a foreign language, written expression tends to develop the ability to organize, structure and distribute ideas, which encourages the application of rhetorical functions such as the description of a general parameter and all its nuances: definition, explanation, exemplification. It considers the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic components in the text. It is fundamental for the strengthening of communicative competences.

In the professional environment, written expression forms part of the competences required by current students and future professionals, who must know how to write adequately and

effectively; it constitutes an instrument of training, a means of access, a way of managing knowledge and approaching culture; it presupposes the improvement of communicative competence; it guarantees efficiency in their activity and favours their subsequent integration into the professional community (University of Pennsylvania, n.d.).

The University of Pennsylvania highlights that strong written expression is not just a desirable skill but a necessity in today's professional landscape, enabling individuals to stand out in their careers and contribute meaningfully to their organizations

Within professional writing journalistic writing is a specialized style used by journalists to report news and convey information to the public. It is characterized by its emphasis on accuracy, clarity, and objectivity, aiming to inform rather than persuade. This form of writing is essential in various media, including newspapers, magazines, television, and online platforms, ensuring that significant events and issues are presented in a concise and understandable manner. Journalistic writing prioritizes factual accuracy, which is crucial for maintaining credibility in the media. Students learn to verify information rigorously before publication, a skill vital for any future journalist.

According to Vaia Educational Team (2024) journalistic writing is a style used to report news stories, emphasizing factual accuracy, clarity, and impartiality, serving to inform the public about significant events and issues.

This definition highlights the core characteristics of journalistic writing, which are essential for maintaining credibility and informing the public effectively.

Wikipedia (2024) states that journalistic writing refers to the structured and factual style employed by journalists to report news, focusing on accuracy, objectivity, and brevity in delivering news to the public.

This definition underscores the importance of structure and brevity in journalistic writing, which aids in clear communication of important news to diverse audiences.

These definitions collectively illustrate the fundamental principles of journalistic writing, emphasizing its role in fostering informed public discourse through accurate and objective reporting.

Motivations for writing include different forms such as essays, personal or business letters, personal and official e-mails, text messages, forms and questionnaires; publications in social networks, articles for magazines, newsletters, reports, memos, etc., by handwriting or with the application of Information and Communication Technologies. Journalistic mediums can vary diversely, from print publishing to electronic broadcasting, and from newspaper to television channels, as well as to the web, and to digital technology.

These activities are contextualised in a wide range of fields, among which the professional

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academic one stands out. These activities must be:

- Processual and systemic: the stages of their process constitute an organic whole, relate to each other and allow the gradual advancement of the writer to a higher level in the process of learning to write. The stages and supporting resources are interrelated.

- Communicative: Written expression takes into account the two-way nature of communication. The texts that are written have concrete purposes and are addressed to a specific audience.

- Interactive and reflective: in order to learn and teach written communication, all the subjects involved play a fundamental role, according to their level of experience and development. Interaction between them is vital to achieve a more functional and communicative product.

- Developmental: it encourages and promotes transformations in the behaviour of the participants in the process. It stimulates both the development of communicative skills specific to the written expression of the English language and the development of human qualities. In addition, spaces are created for the participants in the process to identify their limitations (cognitive and affective) on the basis of the texts that are written and reformulated.

- Metacognitive: written expression teaches critical thinking, which means recognising linguistic and communicative limitations. It promotes self-knowledge and control of what is mastered. Its development is active, dynamic, conscious and spiral.

- Integrative and interdisciplinary: it promotes the interrelation of the different forms of verbal activity and the operations of written expression in the English language. It builds on the knowledge, habits, skills and abilities developed in other disciplines.

- Personological oriented: the interests, needs and criteria of the learners are valued. The development of each person who writes is stimulated as an individual with feelings, convictions and values, who develops in a given socio-cultural context and who uses the foreign language as an instrument for communication.

- Dialogic: the dialogue implicit in the exchange between the writer and those who read the text is favoured, emphasising the treatment of the academic-professional needs of the participants.

Conclusions

In order to learn a foreign language, it is not enough to use it in communicative acts, but it is also necessary to reflect consciously on the way in which messages are constructed in that language and consequently on the semiotic concepts underlying communicative acts.

From all this derives the need to work in the classroom from two closely related dimensions: on the one hand, from the socio-cultural dimension which refers to the use of language in communicative situations; on the other hand, from a cognitive dimension which refers to the

mental mechanisms which the learner activates in the attempt to express something in a language which is not his or her own. These mechanisms take the form of metalinguistic and metadiscursive reflection, with which one seeks to become aware of the criteria and indicators of the achievement of the communicative performance being carried out.

It is therefore important to promote in the learner, beyond the ability to communicate in the foreign language, the ability to analyse communicative situations and react appropriately, extracting from the texts worked on or from the input those linguistic elements which best suit what the learner wants to communicate, with agency, and to know how to manipulate them in order to construct his/her own messages.

As a mode of communication written expression underpins academic success, personal expression, and professional advancement. Its importance extends beyond mere mechanics; it encompasses cognitive development and the ability to engage effectively with diverse audiences.

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Responsibility authorial declaration:

Rolando Dámaso Caballero Arias. I have directly contributed to the intellectual content of this manuscript, to the genesis and analysis of its data, for which I am in a position to take public responsibility for it and I accept that my name appears in the list of authors

Midalys Román Betancourt. I have contributed to its conception, and development, as well as to the collection of data, the interpretation of the results, and the drafting and revision of the research paper.

Yaneisy Martínez Adams. I have participated in the design of the research paper and in the critical review of its intellectual content.