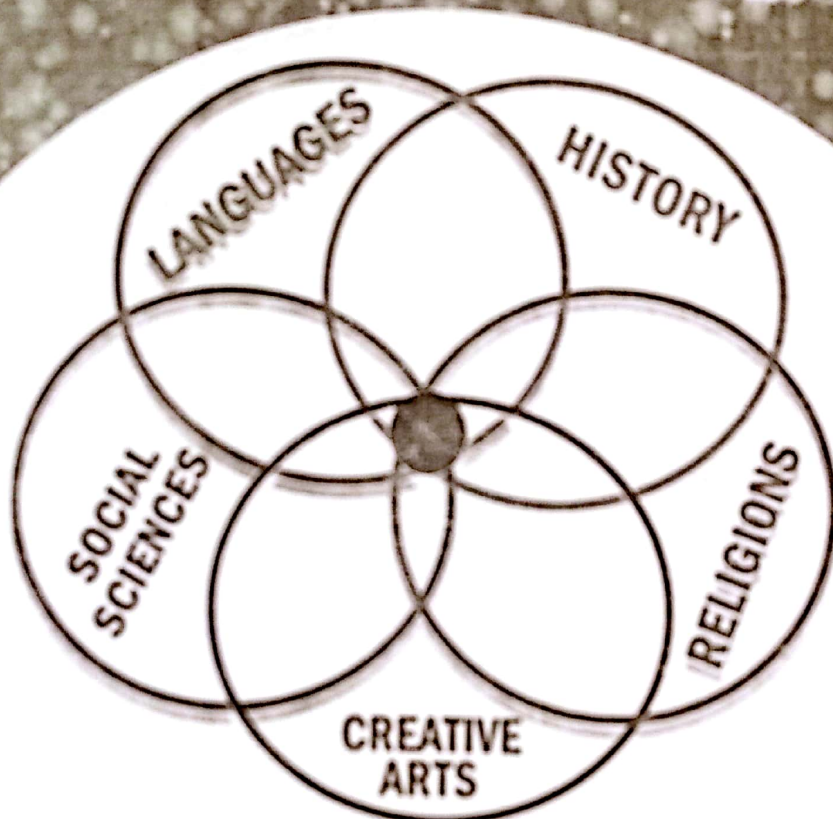


TEACHING METHODOLOGY

in

THE HUMANITIES



Edited by
'Raheem Adebayo Lawal

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INTRODUCTION

The learning of a language entails the ability to use effectively the four communication skills. With the adoption of foreign language teaching based on communicative method, much emphasis was put on the development of spoken skills, while reserving few opportunities for the development of writing skills. However, the acquisition of fluency in the foreign language is not limited only to direct interaction with other people and the spoken word, but also the interaction via reading and writing should be highly considered in the acquisition of language skills.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter, you should be to:

1. encourage foreign students to acquire the ability to write clearly and effectively;
2. develop the linguistic and discursive ability of students; and
3. help students to master different registers of the language.

PROFILE OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE STUDENTS

Lopez-Mayhem (1998:71) noted that "when students study a foreign language, particularly at the secondary and college levels, the acquisition of speaking and writing skills is by far more difficult than acquiring reading and listening skills". This is due to their lack or limitation of vocabulary words and grammatical structures in the target language.

The ability to write involves linguistic competence as well as textual competence. The first competence specifically applies to the morphosyntactic rules of a language, while the second competence calls for the ability of the writer to effectively put in place linguistic, psychological and pragmatic features of writing to be readable and coherent, and this requires cognitive effort. When it comes to writing in a foreign language, the effort becomes double for the writer because he is faced with a difficult task: being compelled to write in a foreign language that does not belong to a socio-affective universe known to him. This explains the reason why essays or composition written by foreign language learners is full of errors which hinder comprehension. At the beginning stage of French learning, the students possess limited words and sentence structures and, they therefore tend to first of all think in their mother-tongue when they are faced with a writing task.

HOW TO TACKLE THE STUDENTS' FRIGHT FOR WRITING SKILLS?

To overcome the fright for writing in French language, the students should be made to write frequently by allowing them to decide on what they want to write about. Encouraging the students in guided writing is very important as it helps them enrich tremendously their vocabulary rather than memorising a list of items; it also affords them the opportunity to use contextually the words they are taught in a classroom on a particular topic, and, by extension, improve also their spoken French. At the beginning, they are bound to make a lot of errors; they should be made to understand that it is normal, provided they are ready to minimise them and improve on their writing.

TEACHING WRITING SKILL STAGE BY STAGE

I. Beginning level

At the beginning of the French language study, it is deteriorative to acquisition of adequate competence to introduce the writing skill to students. Emphasis is mainly put on oral and listening skills. The skill of writing comes later for complete and effective communication.

At the introductory stage of writing in French, the students are encouraged to write simple sentences. The assignments given below are adapted from Gardner (1998).

a. Answer questions in writing using five-to-ten word, simple sentences. This intends to boost their understanding as well as to enable them practise simple sentence level structures.

Example: Où vas-tu? Je vais à la maison.

b. Build up a twelve-to-fifteen-word simple sentence, including appositives, with proper punctuation.

Example: Qui parle avec le directeur? Monsieur Kunle, le nouveau professeur, parle avec le directeur.

c. Form a complex sentence with a relative pronoun.

Example: C'est mon frère; Il porte une chemise verte.

C'est mon frère qui porte une chemise verte.

d. Formulate statements which lead to paragraph writing.

a. Example: Je m'appelle Mariame.

J'ai 11 ans.

Je suis née à Ilorin.

J'habite Ijagbo, près d'Offa.

This will lead to: Je m'appelle Mariame et j'ai 11ans. Je suis née à Ilorin mais j'habite à Ijagbo, une ville située près d'Offa.

a. Formulate statement from an Id card information.

Example: Nom: Champagne

Prénom: Julien

Date de naissance: 12 Septembre 2004

Lieu de naissance: Paris

Domicile: Grenoble

Loisirs: Sport et musique

Profession: élève au Lycée Montagne, Grenoble.

This type of information will give a composition of this nature:

Je m'appelle Julien Champagne. Je suis né le 12 septembre 2004 et j'ai 12 ans. J'habite à Grenoble. J'aime beaucoup le sport et j'ai une grande passion pour la musique. Je suis élève au lycée Montaigne, Grenoble.

b. Write about happenings in your environment such as birthdays, naming, wedding ceremony of a relative, fetching water from public taps or from a well, helping mother in the kitchen, talking about your last holiday... Such a topic can lead students to writing simple letters.

Example: Je me joins à vous pour réjouir de l'arrivée du nouveau-né dans votre famille.

c. Create a short paragraph of essay of not more than five lines, using transitional words for clarity, using pronouns and synonyms to avoid repetitions. Students may be provided with a visual aid to describe.

Example: Describe the scene on this picture. What attracted you most in the picture? Why?

11. Intermediate and Advance Levels

At these two stages, students are expected to have acquired a reasonable amount of vocabulary and an adequate knowledge of language structures that will enable them to build sentences in a logical order, from simple to sentences to compound and more complex ones with the use of simple clauses. At this juncture, they are expected to use a variety of verbs and tenses such as past, future as well as present tense.

At the intermediate level, short and simple sentences can be combined to make more elaborate sentences with the use of adverbial conjunctions.

At the advanced level, it is the continuation of what they have been doing in a more structured way, with the expansion of vocabulary and they are exposed to samples of literary extracts.

According to the National Curriculum for Senior Secondary Schools (2001), the teacher is expected to lead the learners towards developing their ability to write acceptable French that can be understood by the users of the language. He can achieve this through such steps as asking them to write on various themes and subjects within the scope of their experience.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Developing writing skill in the learners will help them convey and receive information accurately and clearly as intended. They will be able to attain effective communication mostly in using printed or digital media, such as books, magazines or website and emails. Writing skill is very important and, if well handled by the teacher, it will enhance learners' spelling ability and help develop the structural aspect of the language.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do you tackle the fright of foreign language students for writing?
2. As a French language teacher, what strategy will you apply to have a fright-free lesson in writing?
3. How will you teach writing competence to the beginners in French language?

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