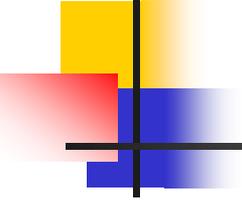


**Revisiting the Use of
Letter Exchange and Journals
in Teaching English Writing Skills**

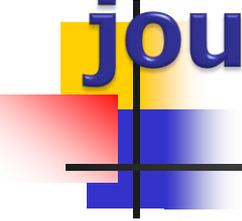
Le Thi Thanh Truc
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Introduction



- Writing: an important but difficult skill
- Insufficient attention in EFL programs
- Letter exchange and journals as effective ways for writing skill improvement

Overview of letter exchange & journals



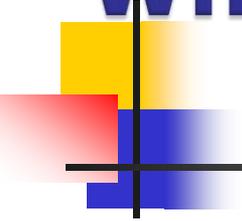
- *Letter exchange:*

- Pen pal exchange vs key pal exchange
- Increasing popularity of key pal exchange

- *Journals:*

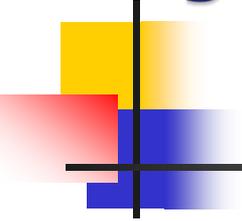
- “informal, largely unplanned way of writing”
- To be read & responded by others

Why letter exchange & journals?



- Offer authentic communication
- Motivate writing practice
- Promote fluency

Contextualizing the learning and teaching of English



- *Students:*

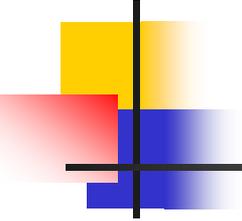
- Lack of sound basic English foundation
- Little experience with English writing
- More emphasis on accuracy than fluency
- Hard-working but ineffective learners
- Passivity
- Poor computer skills or email “illiteracy”
- Varied levels

Contextualizing the learning and teaching of English (cont'd)

- *Teachers:*

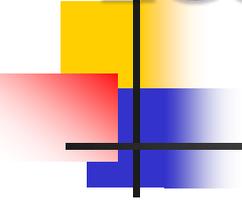
- Highly committed & well aware of students' disadvantaged backgrounds

- Time constraint, heavy workload, numerous non-academic responsibilities



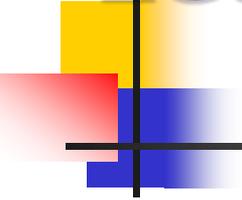
Letter exchange and journal writing: gains, pains and recommendations

Letter exchange



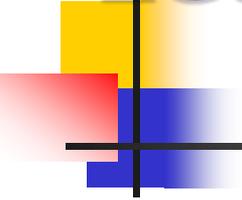
- Obstacles to modern forms of exchange and traditional one
- Adapted version: exchange among classmates
- Procedures:
 - Choose language partner
 - Write letters to peers & exchange
 - Write letters to teachers & hand in all letters
 - Feedback from teachers

Letter exchange: gains



- Stronger linguistic competence
- More fluent writers
- More confidence with writing in English
- Established and tightened friendship
- More motivation to improve English

Letter exchange: pains



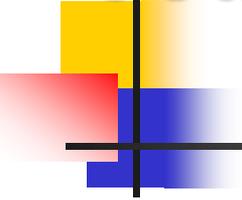
- Lack of ideas
- Disappointment/demotivation due to failure to write effectively or mistakes not corrected
- Frustration with peers
- Lack of sustainability



Letter exchange: Recommendations

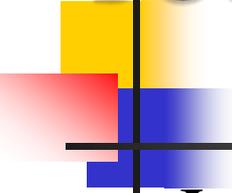
- Brainstorm a list of topics
- Control the activity
- Emphasize benefits of the activity
- Be flexible with sustainability

Journals



- Journals as learning logs
- Journals as reports of field trips

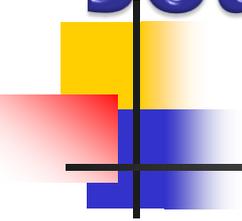
Journals: gains



- *Journals as learning logs*

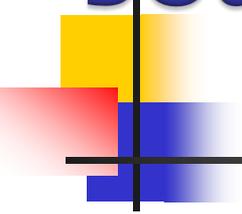
- Habit of writing in English formed
- Writing process facilitated
- Confidence and fluency developed

Journals: gains



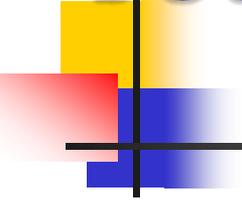
- *Journals as reports of field trips*
 - Writing process facilitated
 - Motivation maintained
 - Activity promoted
 - Study and life experience gained

Journals: pains



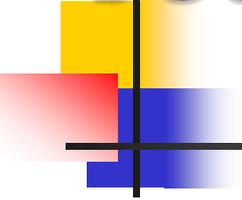
- Frustration
- Time constraint
- Extra workload

Journals: Recommendations

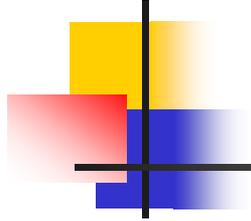


- *Journals as learning logs*
 - Pains and gains clearly explains from the beginning
 - Time better spent
 - Time & effort saved later

Journals: Recommendations



- *Journals as reports of field trips*
 - Reports written in groups
 - Reports read and general feedback given only



Thank you very much
for your attention.