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

Le Thi Thanh Truc  
Thua Thien Hue College of Education  
Email: [bambook1@gmail.com](mailto:bambook1@gmail.com)

# Introduction



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- 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



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- *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?



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- Offer authentic communication
- Motivate writing practice
- Promote fluency

# Contextualizing the learning and teaching of English



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- *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)

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- *Teachers:*

- Highly committed & well aware of students' disadvantaged backgrounds

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



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# Letter exchange and journal writing: gains, pains and recommendations

# Letter exchange



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- 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



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

# Letter exchange: pains



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



## Letter exchange: Recommendations

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

# Journals



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

# Journals: gains



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- *Journals as learning logs*

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

# Journals: gains



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

# Journals: pains



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- Frustration
- Time constraint
- Extra workload

# Journals: Recommendations



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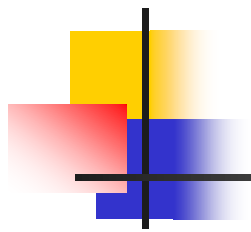
- *Journals as learning logs*
  - Pains and gains clearly explains from the beginning
  - Time better spent
  - Time & effort saved later

# Journals: Recommendations



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



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Thank you very much  
for your attention.