



## KEY PRINCIPLES OF SELECTING WRITING EXERCISES FOR A1-A2 BEGINNER LEARNERS

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### ABSTRACT

*This article examines the challenges and strategies of teaching writing to beginner foreign language learners at the A1-A2 levels. Unlike intermediate and advanced learners, beginners require carefully designed writing activities that develop foundational skills while sustaining motivation. Drawing on recent empirical research, the study highlights collaborative and process-oriented approaches, scaffolded support, and the strategic use of learners' first language as effective methods for improving writing quality and reducing cognitive load. The integration of authentic contexts and technology, including wikis and AI-based feedback, is shown to enhance learner engagement, self-efficacy, and task relevance. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the importance of addressing common beginner errors – such as sentence structure, prepositions, and word choice – through targeted instruction. By synthesizing theoretical frameworks and practical findings, this study proposes evidence-based principles for designing effective writing tasks that foster both accuracy and meaningful communication in beginner learners*

### Introduction

Foreign language writing instruction for beginner learners presents unique pedagogical challenges that require specialized approaches different from those used with intermediate or advanced students. The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) designates A1-A2 levels as basic users who demonstrate elementary language competencies, requiring carefully designed writing activities that support foundational skill development while maintaining learner motivation and engagement.

Research in foreign language writing has traditionally focused on intermediate and advanced learners, leaving a significant gap in understanding effective practices for beginners. This difference is particularly problematic given the critical importance of early writing experiences in shaping learners' long-term language development courses. Recent studies

suggest that inappropriate writing instruction at beginner levels can lead to many errors, reduced motivation, and reduced progress toward higher proficiency levels.

### **Main part**

At the A1-A2 levels, learners possess only basic communicative abilities, making the design of effective writing activities both challenging and essential for long-term language development. Recent research underscores the complexity of teaching writing at this stage, highlighting the need for approaches that balance foundational skill-building with learner motivation and engagement. Collaborative and process-oriented methods, such as group revision and scaffolded support, have been shown to enhance writing quality and reduce cognitive load for beginners<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, integrating learners' first language strategically and leveraging technology – like wikis or AI feedback – can further support skill acquisition and confidence<sup>2</sup>. Understanding learners' needs, preferences, and common difficulties is vital for tailoring instruction that fosters both accuracy and meaningful communication. This article aims to synthesize empirical findings and pedagogical frameworks to establish evidence-based principles for selecting and designing writing exercises that effectively support beginner foreign language learners.

### ***Collaborative and Process-Oriented Approaches***

Collaborative writing and revision, where learners work in small groups to review and revise each other's work, significantly improve writing quality, fluency, and self-correction skills. This method also helps reduce anxiety and fosters an awareness of rhetorical structure, enabling learners to overcome inhibitions related to formal writing aspects<sup>3</sup>. Process-genre approaches, which guide students through stages such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing, are especially effective when implemented collaboratively. These approaches optimize cognitive load and instructional efficiency, as collective working memory in group settings supports the complex demands of writing in a new language<sup>4</sup>.

### ***Scaffolded Support and Use of the First Language (L1) or Lingua Franca***

Structured scaffolding – gradually moving from teacher or peer support to independent writing – enables learners to develop both procedural and linguistic knowledge. Applying Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) framework, teachers can tailor assistance to each learner's needs, promoting self-regulation and internalization of writing skills<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, a principled use of the first language or lingua franca in instruction, such as for

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<sup>1</sup> Jiang, D., & Kalyuga, S. (2022). Learning English as a Foreign Language Writing Skills in Collaborative Settings: A Cognitive Load Perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.932291>

<sup>2</sup> Dai, J., Wang, L., & He, Y. (2023). Exploring the effect of wiki-based writing instruction on writing skills and writing self-efficacy of Chinese English-as-a-foreign language learners. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1069832>

<sup>3</sup> Hedgcock, J., & Lefkowitz, N. (1992). Collaborative oral/aural revision in foreign language writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 1, 255-276. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1060-3743\(92\)90006-B](https://doi.org/10.1016/1060-3743(92)90006-B)

<sup>4</sup> Jiang, D., & Kalyuga, S. (2022). Learning English as a Foreign Language Writing Skills in Collaborative Settings: A Cognitive Load Perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.932291>

<sup>5</sup> Lavin, R. (2020). Operationalizing the zone of proximal development in foreign language writing instruction. <https://doi.org/10.21125/inted.2020.1454>

clarifying tasks or supporting metalinguistic awareness, leads to greater gains in writing proficiency and motivation compared to L2-only instruction<sup>6</sup>.

### ***Authentic Context Integration***

Authentic context integration was identified as essential for maintaining learner engagement and facilitating transfer to real-world communication situations. Studies comparing authentic vs. artificial writing prompts consistently favor authentic contexts, with learners demonstrating 23-31% higher motivation scores and improved task completion rates.

Effective authentic contexts for A1-A2 learners include personal correspondence, form completion, social media posts, and simple descriptions of familiar experiences. Research indicates that writing tasks connected to learners' daily lives and cultural backgrounds produce more engaged participation and meaningful language use.

Cross-cultural studies reveal the importance of culturally responsive authentic contexts, with learners from diverse backgrounds showing improved outcomes when writing topics acknowledge their cultural knowledge and experiences<sup>7</sup>.

### ***Technology Integration and Feedback***

Incorporating technology, such as wikis, machine translation, and AI-based feedback, can enhance writing output, self-efficacy, and engagement for beginners. Wiki-based instruction, for example, has been shown to significantly improve both writing skills and learners' confidence<sup>8</sup>. Machine translation tools help beginners communicate more and produce higher-quality texts, especially when their L2 mastery is limited<sup>9</sup>. AI-driven evaluative feedback supports the development of creative writing, particularly in content, organization, and argumentation, though its impact on grammar and vocabulary may be limited<sup>10</sup>.

### ***Relevance, Motivation, and Learner Needs***

Writing tasks should be relevant to learners' interests and real-life contexts, such as daily life, dreams, travel, and email writing. Activating learners' prior knowledge and providing opportunities for collaboration and idea generation are crucial for maintaining motivation and engagement. Understanding and addressing learners' perceived difficulties and preferences – such as the need for both native and local teachers, or the desire for diverse writing forms – can further enhance instructional effectiveness<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> De La Fuente, M., & Goldenberg, C. (2020). Understanding the role of the first language (L1) in instructed second language acquisition (ISLA): Effects of using a principled approach to L1 in the beginner foreign language classroom. *Language Teaching Research*, 26, pp. 943 - 962. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820921882>

<sup>7</sup> Faiz, A. (2023). The impact of integrating authentic materials on learner engagement and language development. *Transformational Language Literature and Technology Overview in Learning (TRANSTOOL)*. <https://doi.org/10.55047/transtool.v2i4.1378>

<sup>8</sup> Dai, J., Wang, L., & He, Y. (2023). Exploring the effect of wiki-based writing instruction on writing skills and writing self-efficacy of Chinese English-as-a-foreign language learners. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1069832>

<sup>9</sup> Garcia, I., & Peña, M. (2011). Machine translation-assisted language learning: writing for beginners. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 24, 471 - 487. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2011.582687>

<sup>10</sup> Sysoyev, P., & Filatov, E. (2024). Method of teaching students' foreign language creative writing based on evaluative feedback from artificial intelligence. *Perspectives of Science and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.32744/pse.2024.1.6>

<sup>11</sup> D, Z. (2023). Proposal for Writing Education for Myanmar Korean Learners': Focus on a Beginner Learner Needs Survey. *Korean Association For Learner-Centered Curriculum And Instruction*. <https://doi.org/10.22251/ilcci.2023.23.23.15>

### **Addressing Common Errors**

Beginner learners frequently struggle with sentence structure, prepositions, adverbs, and word choice. Effective instruction should include targeted grammar and writing support to address these common errors and promote accurate language use<sup>12</sup>.

### **CONCLUSION**

A synthesis of recent research demonstrates that effective foreign language writing instruction for beginner (A1-A2) learners is best achieved through a combination of collaborative, scaffolded, and contextually meaningful practices. Collaborative and process-oriented approaches, such as group revision and process-genre instruction, not only improve writing quality and fluency but also reduce cognitive load and writing anxiety, making the learning process more accessible and efficient for beginners. Integrating the first language (L1) in a principled way further enhances writing proficiency and motivation, especially when used to clarify tasks and support metalinguistic awareness. The thoughtful use of technology—including wikis, machine translation, and AI feedback—can boost writing output, self-efficacy, and engagement, provided it complements structured instruction and feedback. Additionally, designing writing tasks that are relevant to learners' interests and real-life contexts, while addressing common errors through targeted grammar support, is essential for maintaining motivation and fostering meaningful communication. Ultimately, these evidence-based strategies lay a strong foundation for beginner learners, supporting both immediate skill development and long-term language growth.

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