



Give writing a chance

**Jana Harel and
Bambi Spicer**

continue their discussions about teaching.

We have coined the term ‘professional learning pair’ (PLP) as a result of a series of discussions which deepened our understanding of teaching, by talking candidly and by using academic sources to validate our thoughts (Harel & Spicer, 2022). The topic of writing allowed many hours of conversation, looking at the myriad of experiences that influence the teaching of writing with both of us agreeing that a framework for teaching, as well as a focus on communication, prove valuable tools in allowing the successful development of teaching this literary skill in the high school classroom.

Jana’s story

When I think about teaching writing, I constantly refer back to my elementary school training course, in which the emphasis was on the need for structure

without assuming that students can write freely on any given topic. I have found that this idea has come to my aid in junior high school as well as in high school, as students find it extremely difficult to write, and vigorously complain about having to write an essay in class. It is clear to me now that guided outlines for writing, including sentence starters, are vital as a platform in giving students of all levels the confidence to express themselves in a foreign language. Accordingly, teaching writing in a structured, slow, broken-down way could possibly give students more confidence to succeed.

Bambi’s story

I was taught to write well in university. At first it was difficult for me to share my errors and to recognise that my writing was not up to scratch. Luckily, a very patient communicative university professor invested effort which

changed my trajectory in this field. This experience gave me the patience to learn through constant corrective feedback, leading to the confidence I have today in teaching writing to high school EFL students. So, through my personal experience, I enter the classroom with an inner compass guiding me to encourage, improve, motivate and sort out each student’s writing competence.

The tools Experience

Definition: something that happens to you that affects how you feel

(Cambridge English Dictionary, 2025)

A decade ago, research had shown that personal experiences do not influence approaches to the teaching of writing in a foreign language classroom (Khanalizadeh & Allami, 2012). Later, Erbeli *et al.* (2017) documented that past learning experiences

will also have an effect on the students and should be recognised by both student and teacher. Likewise, Graham and Alves (2021) claimed that knowledge about how to teach writing can be obtained from many different sources, including one's experience. Information on experiences brought into the classroom validates the idea that we as teachers need to become familiar with our personal writing process and allow our students to recognise their own learning story (Harel & Spicer, 2022).

Framework

Definition: a supporting structure around which something can be built

(Cambridge English Dictionary, 2025)

While facilitating writing can be challenging for teachers, it can also be a difficult process for all types of learners. The difficulties can be caused by gaps in language skills that are not obvious to the teacher or the student, who may (as a consequence) display frustration, poor behaviour and low self-confidence. For example, sometimes students' reading abilities (or lack of) can influence teachers who consequently may see no point in teaching writing. This is a shame because learning to write provides an opportunity for language output with an impact on writing instruction as mentioned by Shanahan (1980). Logically, instructions may reduce various gaps met when learning to write, by helping students clearly visualise what they have to do (Harris, 2021). Providing structure can be an anchor for both simple and complex writing, helping students overcome, sometimes hidden, difficulties.

Communication

Definition: the process of sharing information, especially when this increases understanding between people or groups

(Cambridge English Dictionary, 2025)

Encouraging students to talk about their writing acts as a stepping stone to independent writing skills, applying collaboration as well as metacognition. Haines (1998) discusses the theory that working in pairs provides skills to brainstorm independently while Harel and Spicer (2024) show the value of metacognition in the teaching

and learning of the writing process. Thus, talking about writing through self-talk or collaborative work allows different levels of metacognitive thinking to develop. Furthermore, Sun and Zhang (2022) support the idea that metacognition enhances EFL writing performance in the classroom. In addition, there is an imperative place for teacher feedback when students are working together or alone. As research found, comments on students' work consequently have the power to improve the process and the production of their writing (Crivelli *et al.*, 2021).

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Conclusion

Writing involves a lot more than simply putting pen to paper. For this reason, it is important to take interest in the learning stories, create a consistent structure and give ongoing feedback. Above all, we believe that it is pivotal to work with apprehensions regarding students' writing performance and optimistically give writing a chance 😊.

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Jana is originally from Scotland and has been teaching English in Israel for the past nine years. Her students in junior high and high school are from varied backgrounds allowing her the opportunity

to differentiate her methods in the classroom. She thoroughly enjoys her work and the connection she has with her students. jana.harel@gmail.com



Bambi is originally from Australia and has been teaching English in Israel for 29 years. Her students have taught her that both learning and teaching are a process encouraged by patience and

self-awareness. She believes that as an English language teacher she has the chance to interact with the youth who will be leading the world. spicerbambi@gmail.com