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Enhancing Writing Competence in Foreign Language Education: Teachers' Practices, Feedback Strategies and Professional Development Needs

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine teachers' perceptions, practices and professional development needs regarding the teaching of writing in foreign language education. Writing is considered one of the most complex productive skills, as it requires learners to combine linguistic accuracy, textual coherence, pragmatic appropriateness and strategic competence. The study employs a quantitative and descriptive-analytical research design based on a structured questionnaire administered to 164 foreign language teachers in Albania. The questionnaire explored teachers' familiarity with process-oriented writing pedagogy, their confidence in teaching writing, the frequency of structured writing activities, feedback practices, perceived challenges and professional development needs. The findings indicate that most teachers demonstrate moderate familiarity with writing pedagogy, while their confidence in applying systematic writing instruction remains limited. A statistically significant positive correlation was found between teachers' familiarity with process-oriented writing and their confidence in teaching writing effectively. Furthermore, teachers who participated more frequently in professional development activities were more likely to use writing stages, rubrics and revision-oriented feedback. The main challenges reported by teachers include lack of time, large classes, students' limited vocabulary and insufficient training in writing assessment. The study concludes that writing competence should be developed through a systematic, process-based and feedback-oriented approach. Recommendations include targeted teacher training, the development of clear assessment criteria, the use of model texts, peer feedback, writing portfolios and continuous revision practices.

Keywords: writing competence, foreign language teaching, process-oriented writing, feedback, teacher development, writing assessment.

1. Introduction

Writing competence is a central component of foreign language education and one of the most demanding productive skills for learners to acquire. Unlike spontaneous oral

communication, writing requires a higher degree of planning, linguistic control, textual organization and reflection. From a cognitive perspective, writing involves recursive processes of planning, translating ideas into language and reviewing the emerging text, rather than a simple linear movement from idea to final product (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In foreign language learning, this complexity becomes even more evident, since learners must simultaneously generate ideas, organize information, select appropriate vocabulary, apply grammatical rules, create textual coherence and revise their texts according to communicative aims and audience expectations (Hyland, 2003; Weigle, 2002).

In many foreign language classrooms, writing is still treated mainly as a final product. Students are often asked to write a text, submit it and receive corrections or a grade. However, contemporary writing pedagogy emphasizes that writing should be understood as a process rather than merely as a product. Process-oriented approaches underline the importance of supporting learners before, during and after writing through brainstorming, planning, drafting, receiving feedback, revising and reflecting on their own texts (Graham & Perin, 2007; Hyland, 2003). Such approaches are particularly relevant in foreign language education because they help learners develop not only linguistic accuracy, but also textual competence, genre awareness and strategic control over their writing. The teaching of writing is especially important in contexts where foreign language learners have limited exposure to authentic written communication outside the classroom. In such contexts, the teacher plays a decisive role in creating meaningful writing tasks, modelling text structures, providing feedback and encouraging students to revise their written work. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume emphasize written production, written interaction and mediation as essential dimensions of communicative language competence, highlighting the need for learners to produce texts that are coherent, purposeful and appropriate to specific communicative situations (Council of Europe, 2020). Therefore, teachers' methodological knowledge, confidence and ability to design writing tasks are crucial for the development of students' writing competence.

Despite the importance of writing, many teachers face practical and methodological challenges. Writing activities are time-consuming, feedback requires considerable effort, classes may be large and assessment criteria are not always clear. Moreover, research on second language writing has shown that feedback is most effective when it is not limited to error correction, but when it guides learners toward revision and improvement of content, organization, language use and genre appropriateness (Ferris, 2011; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In addition, teachers may not have received sufficient professional training in process-oriented writing pedagogy or formative assessment. For this reason, it is necessary to investigate how teachers perceive writing instruction, which practices they use and what kind of professional support they need.

This study focuses on teachers' perspectives regarding the development of writing competence in foreign language education in Albania. It seeks to identify current classroom practices, challenges and professional development needs related to writing instruction. By examining teachers' familiarity with process-oriented writing, their

confidence in teaching writing, their feedback practices and their perceived training needs, the study aims to contribute to a more systematic understanding of how writing competence can be supported in foreign language classrooms.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Writing competence as a multidimensional construct

Writing competence is not limited to grammatical correctness. It is a multidimensional construct that includes linguistic, textual, pragmatic, strategic and metacognitive dimensions. From this perspective, a competent writer is not only able to produce grammatically correct sentences, but also to organize ideas logically, structure texts coherently, adapt written production to a specific genre, address the intended reader and revise the text critically according to communicative aims (Hyland, 2003; Weigle, 2002). Writing therefore requires the integration of language knowledge, discourse competence and cognitive control, making it one of the most complex productive skills in foreign language learning (Kellogg, 2008).

In foreign language education, writing competence is closely connected to other language skills. Reading provides learners with models of text organization, genre conventions and lexical patterns, while speaking can support the development and clarification of ideas before writing. Grammar and vocabulary provide the linguistic resources necessary for accurate and meaningful expression. For this reason, writing should not be taught as an isolated skill, but as part of an integrated language learning process in which receptive and productive skills mutually reinforce one another (Manchón, 2011; Hyland, 2003). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages also emphasizes written production, written interaction and mediation as essential components of communicative competence, which confirms the importance of writing as both a linguistic and communicative activity (Council of Europe, 2020).

2.2 Process-oriented writing

Process-oriented writing pedagogy views writing as a recursive and dynamic activity rather than a linear act of producing a final text. Classical cognitive models of writing describe the writing process as an interaction between planning, translating ideas into language and reviewing the emerging text (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In classroom practice, these processes are usually translated into several stages, such as pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising, editing and presenting the final version. In this approach, the teacher does not evaluate only the final product, but supports learners throughout the different phases of text production.

This approach is particularly useful for foreign language learners because it reduces the pressure of producing a perfect text immediately and allows learners to develop their ideas gradually. Through planning, drafting and revision, students can experiment with language, receive feedback and improve their texts step by step. Research on writing

instruction has shown that explicit strategy teaching, planning activities, collaborative writing and revision practices can contribute significantly to the improvement of students' writing performance (Graham & Perin, 2007; Graham et al., 2012). Process-oriented writing also promotes learner autonomy, since students become more aware of the strategies they use to plan, monitor and improve their own writing (Hyland, 2003).

2.3 Feedback and revision in writing instruction

Feedback is one of the most important elements in the development of writing competence. However, feedback is effective only when learners understand it, are able to act upon it and are given opportunities to revise their texts. Traditional correction often focuses mainly on grammar and spelling, but writing development also requires feedback on content, organization, coherence, style, genre appropriateness and communicative effectiveness (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Ferris, 2011). Therefore, feedback should not be reduced to error identification, but should function as a formative tool that guides learners toward textual improvement.

Revision-oriented feedback encourages students to see writing as a process of development rather than as a one-time task. It helps learners understand the strengths and weaknesses of their texts and supports them in making meaningful changes. Feedback may be provided by the teacher, by peers or through self-assessment instruments such as checklists and rubrics. Peer feedback can be particularly valuable in foreign language classrooms because it encourages learners to read critically, compare texts, discuss criteria and reflect on writing quality (Rollinson, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In addition, formative assessment practices, including rubrics and guided revision, can strengthen students' ability to evaluate and improve their own writing (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

2.4 Professional development in writing pedagogy

Teachers need specific professional preparation to teach writing effectively. General language teaching experience is not always sufficient, because writing instruction requires knowledge of genre conventions, writing strategies, feedback techniques, assessment criteria and learner support mechanisms. Teachers must be able to design meaningful writing tasks, use model texts, guide students through the writing process, apply rubrics and organize revision-oriented feedback. Research on second language writing emphasizes that teachers' beliefs, methodological knowledge and assessment practices strongly influence how writing is taught and how students experience writing in the classroom (Lee, 2017; Hyland, 2003).

For this reason, teacher training in writing pedagogy should be practical, continuous and classroom-oriented. Workshops, collaborative planning, classroom demonstrations, writing assessment training and peer exchange among teachers can strengthen writing instruction and improve student outcomes. Professional development should help teachers move beyond product-oriented correction toward a more process-based

and formative approach to writing instruction. Such training can support teachers in developing more transparent criteria, more effective feedback practices and more coherent writing tasks adapted to learners' needs (Graham et al., 2012; Lee, 2017).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study uses a quantitative research design with a descriptive-analytical approach. A structured questionnaire was developed to collect data on teachers' familiarity, confidence, practices, challenges and professional development needs related to writing instruction in foreign language education.

3.2 Participants

The study included **164 foreign language teachers** from public and private schools in Albania. The participants taught different foreign languages, mainly German, English, Italian and French. They represented both urban and rural educational contexts.

Table 1. Demographic profile of participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	132	80.49%
	Male	32	19.51%
Teaching location	Urban	109	66.46%
	Rural	55	33.54%
Teaching experience	1–5 years	28	17.07%
	6–10 years	39	23.78%
	11–20 years	61	37.20%
	More than 20 years	36	21.95%
School level	Lower secondary	58	35.37%
	Upper secondary	79	48.17%
	Both levels	27	16.46%

3.3 Instrument

The research instrument was a structured questionnaire consisting of 32 items, designed to collect data on teachers' perceptions, practices and professional development needs related to writing instruction in foreign language education. The questionnaire was organized into six thematic sections in order to cover the main dimensions of the study. The first section gathered demographic information, including teaching experience, school

level and teaching location. The second section focused on teachers' familiarity with writing pedagogy, particularly their knowledge of process-oriented approaches, writing stages and genre-based instruction. The third section examined teachers' confidence in teaching writing and in guiding students through different phases of text production. The following sections addressed teachers' actual classroom practices in writing instruction, including the frequency of writing tasks, the use of planning activities, model texts, drafting and revision. Special attention was also given to feedback and assessment strategies, since these are central components of writing development. Teachers were asked about the types of feedback they most frequently provide, the use of rubrics, peer feedback, self-assessment and revision-oriented correction. The final section explored the main challenges teachers face when teaching writing, as well as their professional development needs in this area.

Most items were measured through Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice items and frequency-based scales. This structure made it possible to obtain both general tendencies and more specific information about teachers' methodological practices, perceived difficulties and preferences for future training in writing pedagogy.

3.4 Research questions

In order to examine teachers' perceptions, practices and professional development needs related to writing instruction, the study was structured around five research questions. These questions were designed to address both the descriptive dimension of the study, namely teachers' current familiarity, confidence and classroom practices, and the analytical dimension, which explores possible relationships between professional development, teaching experience and approaches to writing pedagogy.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the current level of teachers' familiarity and confidence regarding writing pedagogy in foreign language education?

RQ2: What writing instruction practices and feedback strategies are most frequently used by teachers?

RQ3: What challenges do teachers perceive in teaching and assessing writing?

RQ4: Is there a relationship between teachers' familiarity with writing pedagogy, their confidence and their participation in professional development?

RQ5: Do teachers' professional development preferences differ according to their teaching experience or frequency of participation in training?

4. Variables of the Study

In order to examine teachers' perceptions and practices related to writing instruction, the study included several groups of variables. These variables were selected to identify not only teachers' background characteristics, but also their methodological familiarity, confidence, classroom practices and professional development needs. The distinction between independent, dependent and categorical variables made it possible to analyse

both general tendencies and possible relationships between teachers' professional profiles and their approaches to writing pedagogy.

The main variables of the study were:

Independent variables

- Teaching experience
- Teaching location
- Participation in professional development
- School level

Dependent variables

- Familiarity with process-oriented writing pedagogy
- Confidence in teaching writing
- Frequency of structured writing activities
- Use of writing stages
- Use of feedback strategies
- Attitude toward writing-focused instruction

Categorical variables

- Preferred feedback type
- Main perceived challenge
- Preferred professional development format

5. Results and Data Analysis

5.1 Descriptive analysis

The descriptive data show that most teachers have a moderate level of familiarity with process-oriented writing pedagogy. Only a small number of teachers reported no familiarity, while fewer than one quarter reported high familiarity.

Table 2. Teachers' familiarity with process-oriented writing pedagogy

Level of familiarity	Frequency	Percentage
No familiarity	5	3.05%
Low familiarity	29	17.68%
Moderate familiarity	92	56.10%
High familiarity	38	23.17%
Total	164	100%

These results suggest that teachers are generally aware of modern writing pedagogy, but this awareness does not necessarily translate into systematic classroom practice. Teachers' confidence in teaching writing was more limited. While 31.71% of teachers reported feeling confident or very confident, a considerable proportion remained neutral or expressed low confidence.

Table 3. Teachers' confidence in teaching writing

Level of confidence	Frequency	Percentage
Very low confidence	12	7.32%
Low confidence	37	22.56%
Neutral	63	38.41%
Confident	42	25.61%
Very confident	10	6.10%
Total	164	100%

The data indicate a gap between theoretical awareness and practical confidence. This finding is important because teachers may understand the value of writing pedagogy but still feel uncertain about how to apply it effectively.

Regarding classroom practices, 40.85% of teachers reported using structured writing tasks often, while only 15.24% used them very often.

Table 4. Frequency of structured writing tasks

Frequency	Number of teachers	Percentage
Total	164	100%
Rarely	18	10.98%
Sometimes	54	32.93%
Often	67	40.85%
Very often	25	15.24%

The use of writing stages was also examined. The data show that only 17.07% of teachers systematically guide students through all stages of the writing process.

Table 5. Use of writing stages in classroom practice

Use of writing stages	Frequency	Percentage
Never	14	8.54%
Occasionally	49	29.88%
Frequently	73	44.51%
Systematically	28	17.07%
Total	164	100%

This suggests that process-oriented writing is present in classroom practice, but it is

not yet fully institutionalized or systematically implemented.

5.2 Feedback practices

Teachers were also asked to identify their most common feedback strategy. The results show that grammar-focused correction remains the dominant practice.

Table 6. Main feedback strategies used by teachers

Feedback strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Grammar and spelling correction	57	34.76%
General holistic comments	23	14.02%
Rubric-based feedback	34	20.73%
Peer feedback	20	12.20%
Revision-oriented feedback	30	18.29%
Total	164	100%

Although grammar correction is important, the dominance of this strategy may limit students' understanding of writing as a process. Revision-oriented and rubric-based feedback appear less frequently, although these forms are more closely connected to formative writing development.

5.3 Perceived challenges

Teachers identified several challenges in teaching writing. The most frequently reported challenge was lack of time, followed by large classes and students' limited vocabulary.

Table 7. Main challenges in teaching writing

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of time for writing and feedback	49	29.88%
Large classes	35	21.34%
Students' limited vocabulary	31	18.90%
Insufficient teacher training	27	16.46%
Unclear assessment criteria	22	13.42%
Total	164	100%

These findings show that writing instruction is affected not only by methodological knowledge, but also by institutional and practical classroom conditions.

5.4 Professional development needs

Teachers expressed a clear need for further professional development in writing pedagogy. The most preferred formats were practical workshops and training on feedback and assessment.

Table 8. Preferred professional development formats

Professional development format	Frequency	Percentage
Practical workshops on writing instruction	52	31.71%
Training on feedback and assessment	45	27.44%
Collaborative teacher seminars	29	17.68%
Online courses	18	10.98%
Classroom-based mentoring	20	12.19%
Total	164	100%

The preference for practical workshops suggests that teachers need concrete examples, teaching materials and applicable classroom techniques rather than purely theoretical training.

6. Inferential Analysis

6.1 Differences according to teaching experience

A Kruskal–Wallis H test was conducted to examine whether teaching experience influenced teachers’ familiarity with writing pedagogy and their confidence in teaching writing.

Table 9. Kruskal–Wallis H test by teaching experience

Variable	Kruskal–Wallis H	p-value	Interpretation
Familiarity with writing pedagogy	4.12	0.249	No significant difference
Confidence in teaching writing	7.96	0.047	Significant difference
Use of writing stages	6.38	0.094	No significant difference

The results indicate that teaching experience does not significantly affect familiarity with writing pedagogy. However, a statistically significant difference was found in confidence. Teachers with more than 10 years of experience reported higher confidence in teaching writing than less experienced teachers.

6.2 Differences between urban and rural teachers

A Mann–Whitney U test was used to examine whether teachers’ location influenced their familiarity and confidence.

Table 10. Mann–Whitney U test by teaching location

Variable	Mann–Whitney U	p-value	Interpretation
Familiarity with writing pedagogy	2869.0	0.118	No significant difference
Confidence in teaching writing	3010.5	0.267	No significant difference
Use of rubrics	2744.0	0.073	No significant difference

The results show no statistically significant difference between urban and rural teachers. This suggests that challenges in writing instruction are not limited to one geographical context, but are more generally present across teaching environments.

6.3 Correlation between familiarity, confidence and professional development

Spearman’s rank correlation was used to examine relationships between the main variables.

Table 11. Spearman’s rank correlations

Variables	Spearman’s rs	p-value	Interpretation
Familiarity – Confidence	0.421	< 0.001	Moderate positive significant correlation
Professional development – Use of writing stages	0.304	< 0.001	Small to moderate positive significant correlation
Confidence – Use of rubrics	0.286	< 0.001	Small positive significant correlation
Confidence – Revision-oriented feedback	0.392	< 0.001	Moderate positive significant correlation
Frequency of writing tasks – Positive attitude	0.337	< 0.001	Moderate positive significant correlation

The findings show that teachers who are more familiar with process-oriented writing pedagogy tend to feel more confident in teaching writing. In addition, teachers who participate more frequently in professional development activities are more likely to use writing stages, rubrics and revision-based feedback.

6.4 Chi-square analysis

Chi-square tests were conducted to examine associations between categorical variables.

Table 12. Chi-square tests

Variables	Chi-square χ^2	p- value	Interpretation
Feedback strategy – Confidence level	31.62	0.012	Significant association
Professional development preference – Training participation	18.44	0.430	No significant association
Perceived benefits – Positive attitude toward writing instruction	46.29	< 0.001	Significant association
Perceived challenges – Attitude toward writing instruction	21.37	0.126	No significant association

The results indicate that teachers' confidence is significantly associated with the type of feedback they use. More confident teachers are more likely to use rubrics, peer feedback and revision-oriented feedback, while less confident teachers rely more heavily on grammar correction.

The significant association between perceived benefits and positive attitude suggests that teachers who recognize the value of writing instruction are more likely to support systematic writing pedagogy. However, perceived challenges do not significantly reduce positive attitudes, meaning that teachers may still value writing instruction even when they face practical obstacles.

7. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several important aspects of writing instruction in foreign language education. First, most teachers demonstrate at least moderate familiarity with writing pedagogy, but their confidence in applying systematic writing instruction remains limited. This confirms the existence of a gap between theoretical awareness and practical implementation.

Second, the data show that writing is frequently used in foreign language classrooms, but not always through a fully process-oriented approach. Many teachers guide students through some writing stages, but only a minority implement all stages systematically. This suggests that process-oriented writing pedagogy has entered classroom practice, but it has not yet become a stable and consistent instructional model.

Third, the dominance of grammar-focused correction shows that writing is still often understood through the lens of linguistic accuracy. While grammatical correctness is important, an excessive focus on errors may prevent students from developing broader textual and communicative competence. Writing instruction should therefore include feedback on content, structure, coherence, argumentation, genre and audience awareness. Fourth, the results highlight the importance of professional development. Teachers who participate more frequently in training are more likely to use rubrics, writing stages and revision-oriented feedback. This indicates that professional development

can influence classroom practice, especially when it is practical and directly connected to teaching challenges.

Finally, the study shows that teachers value writing instruction despite the difficulties they experience. Lack of time, large classes and limited student vocabulary are serious challenges, but they do not necessarily lead to negative attitudes. This is an encouraging finding because it suggests that teachers are open to improving writing instruction if they receive adequate support.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made.

First, writing instruction should be organized as a process. Teachers should guide students through pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising and editing. This would help students understand that writing is not a one-step activity, but a gradual process of development.

Second, feedback should become more formative and revision-oriented. Instead of correcting every error, teachers should focus on selected aspects of the text and give students the opportunity to improve their work.

Third, assessment criteria should be made transparent. Rubrics and checklists can help both teachers and students understand what constitutes a good written text.

Fourth, professional development programs should focus on practical writing pedagogy. Training should include model lessons, sample texts, correction strategies, peer feedback techniques and examples of writing portfolios.

Fifth, students should be trained to revise their own texts. Self-assessment and peer assessment can strengthen learner autonomy and reduce the exclusive dependence on teacher correction.

9. Conclusion

This study examined teachers' perceptions, practices and professional development needs regarding writing instruction in foreign language education. The findings show that teachers are generally aware of the importance of writing competence, but many still lack confidence in applying systematic, process-oriented writing pedagogy.

The results indicate that familiarity with writing pedagogy is positively related to confidence, while professional development is associated with more effective classroom practices such as the use of writing stages, rubrics and revision-oriented feedback. The main challenges include limited time, large classes, students' insufficient vocabulary and lack of specialized training.

The study concludes that writing competence should be developed through a structured, process-based and feedback-oriented approach. Teachers need institutional support, practical training and clear assessment instruments in order to help learners become more competent and autonomous writers. Strengthening writing pedagogy in foreign language education is therefore essential not only for improving written production,

but also for enhancing students' broader communicative and academic competence.

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