

# Expressão Escrita em Língua Inglesa I

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São Cristóvão/SE  
2016

# Expressão Escrita em Língua Inglesa I

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# Sumário

<b>AULA 1</b>	
Class Title – Write to learn, learn to write. ....	07
<b>AULA 2</b>	
Understanding dependent clauses .....	17
<b>AULA 3</b>	
Sentence structure: subject and verb agreement .....	25
<b>AULA 4</b>	
Sentence structure: correcting misplaced or dangling modifiers.....	33
<b>AULA 5</b>	
Punctuation in sentence structure .....	43
<b>AULA 6</b>	
Using Pronouns .....	53
<b>AULA 7</b>	
The Paragraph.....	61
<b>AULA 8</b>	
The Topic Sentence.....	69
<b>AULA 9</b>	
Types of Paragraph.....	77
<b>AULA 10</b>	
Writing the paragraph: arranging details. ....	87



# Aula 1

## **CLASS TITLE – WRITE TO LEARN, LEARN TO WRITE.**

### **META**

Raise awareness about the growing importance of writing in our globalized society, and the importance of improving the writing skill.

### **OBJETIVOS**

At the end of this class, it is expected that the students:  
Reflect upon the role of writing in the present context marked by the Internet and social media;  
Acknowledge the link between all the linguistic skills: writing, reading, listening, and speaking;  
Recognize the importance of writing texts considering aspects of coherence, cohesion and accuracy.

### **PRERREQUISITOS**

Knowledge developed in previous semesters.

**Maria Amália Vargas Façanha**

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the new semester! And welcome to this new stage of your studies about the English Language! The course *Expressão Escrita em Língua Inglesa* is dedicated to improve your Writing in English and I hope that you make the most of it! The idea is to help you get even more involved in issues related to the way you and other people write. Even though the main focus here is on the writing skill, all the 04 (four) linguistic skills work together. How? Well, we need to read in order to write well; when we speak, we are creating texts in our minds, and when we listen to what other people say, we are receiving information in the form of oral texts, right? As you can see, texts are being written all the time, one way or the other.

This is another opportunity you have to learn new things and to improve your knowledge about topics and structures you've learnt in the previous semesters. You will be reviewing contents as you work with new topics here. Below there is a summary of the contents and topics we will be covering throughout the semester.

In UNIT 1, the focus of our studies will be on topics related to Cohesion and Coherence and Sentence Structure: understanding dependent clauses; maintaining subject/verb agreement; correcting misplaced or dangling modifiers; using pronouns and reviewing punctuation. We will be working on these points in a contextualized way, through the analysis of texts.

In UNIT 2, we will be talking about the Paragraph: the definition of a paragraph; the structure of a paragraph; the parts of a paragraph; topic sentences; the development of a paragraph; paragraph support and development; arranging details in the paragraph.

Make the most of all the units! As you know, the success of your studies depends on how involved you get in the different opportunities we provide you with. Remember: besides this book, you can interact with your teachers and classmates through chats, forums, email exchange, and classroom meetings. I highly recommend that you visit the links suggested here that include: videos and various activities on writing.

Try to be autonomous, creating your own learning moments. Do research and share your findings with us! As you know, the Internet has been an important and exciting environment of research and of production of texts. There you can write; listen to music; watch videos, online TV, programs; participate in groups, etc. One more thing: get into the habit of using the dictionary and grammar books to help you in case you have doubts. And, of course, always share your findings and doubts with your teachers and colleagues. Are you ready? Let's start!





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Brainstorming - Let's start by thinking about the following questions:

Why do people write?

What do people write about?

How often do you write?

Are you good at writing?

What are your feelings about it? Do you like writing or not?

How often do you write? Do you write every day?

Do you consider the writing skill important?

Now, think of the various ways people communicate nowadays when the Internet occupies a central role in our lives. Written and visual texts are present everywhere, and new ways of expressing ideas and feelings appear all the time. According to Barton and Lee (2015, p.30): “As atividades das pessoas em todas as áreas da vida social, na vida cotidiana, na educação e nos locais de trabalho são textualmente mediadas”. That is absolutely true! This situation gains even more importance when we think of communication and the amazing opportunities of interaction provided by the social media. See the definition below:

**Social media** are computer-mediated tools that allow people or companies to create, share, or exchange information, career interests, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks. The variety of stand-alone and built-in social media services currently available introduces challenges of definition; however, there are some common features: (1) social media are Web 2.0 internet-based applications, (2) user-generated content (UGC) is the lifeblood of the social media organism, (3) users

create service-specific profiles for the site or app that are designed and maintained by the social media organization, and (4) social media facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals and/or groups. (Online source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_media](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media) Last access on May 1th, 2016).



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With that in mind, read the text below to help you reflect upon the growing importance of writing nowadays:

## THE INTERNET HAS CREATED A GENERATION OF GREAT WRITERS (BY PENELOPE TRUNK)

The best writers in the history of the world are graduating from college, right now. So everyone can just shut up about how no one can write anymore. Newsflash: No one could write in the Middle Ages, when the good writers wrote in Latin and everyone else spoke colloquial languages like French and English, which priests told them were too lame for real writing.

It's the same situation today in that the best way to have a population of good writers is for people to write constantly, in the language that is theirs, so that they are great at expressing themselves. People do good writing every day, in social media—when they write a note on someone's Facebook wall, when they post a caption to a photo on flickr, or when they post a comment in a group on Brazen Careerist.

The people who are complaining that no one can write anymore are the same ones who are stressed about information overload. This is not a coincidence. Information is changing, the flow of ideas is changing, and written communication is changing with it. Information overload is the feeling of not being able to deal with this change. Young people do not feel information overload, which is another sign that they are excellent writers for the new millennium: They can process and communicate new ideas at the new pace.

I remember the first time in my life I heard about people who can't write anymore. It was my grandma telling me to read A Little Princess, instead of Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret. The people who tell you who can write and who can't are the people who don't want language to change. They don't want ideas to change. They don't want people to talk in ways that are new to them.

And now, for all you doubters, I present the research to end all research. It comes from Andrea Lunsford, a professor of writing and rhetoric at Stanford University. She has conducted the Stanford Study of Writing, which includes about 15,000 writing samples from students from 2001 — 2006. The always-interesting Clive Thompson reported her findings in Wired magazine:

First, only 38 percent of the writing young people do takes place in the classroom. Prior to the Internet, almost all writing people did was for the classroom. The increased amount of writing that young people do outside the classroom these days is so significant that Lunsford calls it a paradigm shift.

Second, the type of writing that students do—via IM, Twitter, Facebook, and so forth—is actually great for building communication skills. Thompson writes that, “Lunsford’s team found that the students were

remarkably adept at what rhetoricians call kairos“ assessing their audience and adapting their tone and technique to best get their point across. The modern world of online writing, particularly in chat and on discussion threads, is conversational and public, which makes it closer to the Greek tradition of argument than the asynchronous letter and essay writing of 50 years ago.”

Third, the students have an acute sense of what good writing is because they are almost always writing for an audience. Lumsford found that students are writing mostly to debate, organize, or persuade. This is much more demanding writing than most of the writing students do for school. And, in fact, students in the Stanford study were not as enthusiastic about writing for school because they felt that the only purpose was to get a grade.

Finally, for those of you who think students don't know how to write in full sentences, you are the people who probably don't understand how to use text as a persuasive medium.

Lumsford finds that students are adept at making their point heard across a wide audience. And a study about Twitter, reported in Fast Company, shows that the text most likely to go viral—that is, the most persuasive text—does not have abbreviations or emoticons, the evidence most cited of a crisis in modern writing skills. Which means that students probably know intuitively to use texting slang only when texting.

Which makes me think that the people who are most worried that kids today don't know how to write are the people who are most unable to write for an audience.

In the history of western thought, the first thing to happen when there was a paradigm shift was that the writing shifted, (Chaucer's stories of common people and Martin Luther's translations of the Bible come to mind). And the first people to complain were those who had a stake in keeping things the same. So ask yourself, do you want to be part of the next period in history, or do you want to be a person representing the futile force in history that tries to hold us back?

(Online source - available on: <http://blog.penelopetrunk.com>)



### ACTIVITY

Read the text again to answer the following questions:

1. The point the writer wants to make is that the best writers nowadays are:
  - a) university professors ( )
  - b) students who are not graduated from university yet ( )
  - c) professional writers ( )
  - d) adults with experience in literary writing ( )

2. Does the author believe writing in social media is a positive practice?
3. When talking about the results of a research conducted by a professor of writing and rhetoric at Stanford University, it is correct to say that:
  - a) The Internet is affecting students' writings negatively ( )
  - b) Young people are writing more often outside the classrooms, through social media and it is very positive ( )
  - c) Writing on the Internet is more challenging and interesting for young people than writing at school.
  - d) Young people do not know how to be persuasive and fail communicating.
4. And you, do you agree with the points presented here? Share your ideas with your teachers and colleagues.

### COMMENTS ON THE ACTIVITY

We decided to use this text to help contextualize the growing importance of the writing skill nowadays. Discuss your answers with your teacher and classmates and think of the ways you deal with this skill.

#### Some food for thought...

The fact is: people have been writing more than ever mainly due to the various possibilities of interaction provided by the Internet. Messages are being exchanged all the time through the social media: Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Blogs and so on. The topics vary according to the writers' interests and needs and there is no age or professional limits for active participation.

On the contrary, just like the results of the research we've read about points to, younger people are improving their communicative skills from the interactions that happen in real contexts of communication, beyond school walls, through the tools provided by the social media. In sum, a good point for the schools to ponder is the fact that students have been writing a lot and learning how to become persuasive and more proficient writers, when communication becomes meaningful for them. And that is happening, mainly, through the spaces found in the social media. What about your writing practice?

Do you worry about the way you write?

How do you grade your writing skill?

Do you care about the accuracy and coherency of your texts?

To help you answer those questions, let's talk about the concepts of accuracy, coherency/coherence and cohesion. For such, we got the help of Dictionary.com (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/accuracy>):

**Accuracy (noun)** - the condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness.

**Coherency (or coherence) (noun)** - logical interconnection; overall sense or understandability. Linguistics. the property of unity in a written

text or a segment of spoken discourse that stems from the links among its underlying ideas and from the logical organization and development of its thematic content.

**Cohesion (noun)** – the act or state of cohering, uniting, or sticking together. Linguistics. the property of unity in a written text or a segment of spoken discourse that stems from links among its surface elements, as when words in one sentence are repeated in another, and especially from the fact that some words or phrases depend for their interpretation upon material in preceding or following text, as in the sequence Be assured of this. Most people do not want to fight. However, they will do so when provoked, where this refers to the two sentences that follow, they refers back to most people, do so substitutes for the preceding verb fight, and however relates the clause that follows to the preceding sentence.

To make a story short, texts that are produced based on those three elements are the ones in which ideas are well connected, they make sense, and the text is free from errors. When I say ‘free from errors’, it is important to highlight that linguistic differences exist between people and they should be respected. The point here, though, is the importance of mastering the skill of writing so we become able to communicate in different contexts. Some environments demand that we get more careful about the way we write. Let us know read another definition of accuracy provided by the British Council (Online source: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/accuracy> Last access on May 1st, 2016).

Accuracy refers to how correct learners' use of the language system is, including their use of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. Accuracy is often compared to fluency when we talk about a learner's level of speaking or writing.



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What does it take to become a good writer? How can we produce texts free from errors? Through practice! Yes, the more we write, the more proficient we get. The more we read, the better we write. The more we read and write, the better we communicate. That's why we say that all the skills are connected. Use your previous linguistic knowledge in English to produce great texts.

As a starting point, why don't you review some grammar points while you learn new ones? We finish this introductory class with a suggestion of a link with some examples of cohesion in sentences. (Online source: <http://aeo.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/Files/Cohesion/Cohesion%201.pdf>. Last access on May 1st, 2016).



## SUMMARY

We've introduced the studies of this semester by talking about the growing importance of the writing skill nowadays when communication gets even more mediated by social media tools. Pedagogical practices involved in the English teaching and learning process need to be connected to the real communicative needs of speakers/learners. Writing is a powerful tool if we give it the attention and efforts it deserves. See you next class!



## SELF-EVALUATION

Am I able to establish connections between the contents of this class and my reality?

Did I increase my knowledge related to the English language?

Was it easy for me to understand the contents of this class?

Has my knowledge of the English language improved considering the studies and practices of previous semesters?



## NEXT CLASS

Next class, the focus of your studies will be on understanding dependent clauses. See you then!

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