



Tips for Teachers

Changing Roles in the Writing Process

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When one thinks of all the advantages contained in the process approach—as far as writing is concerned—the product approach falls in disfavor.

Among the advantages of the process approach, I would name but a few:

- the topic is explored
- ideas are discovered, explored and organized
- the emphasis is on fluency rather than on accuracy
- last but not least, the class is learner-centered

Below, I will attempt to describe a tried technique that worked successfully with my third year learners.

Writing assignment: What is marine debris caused by? What effects does it have?

Theme covered: Great Challenges to Mankind

Topic covered: Marine Pollution

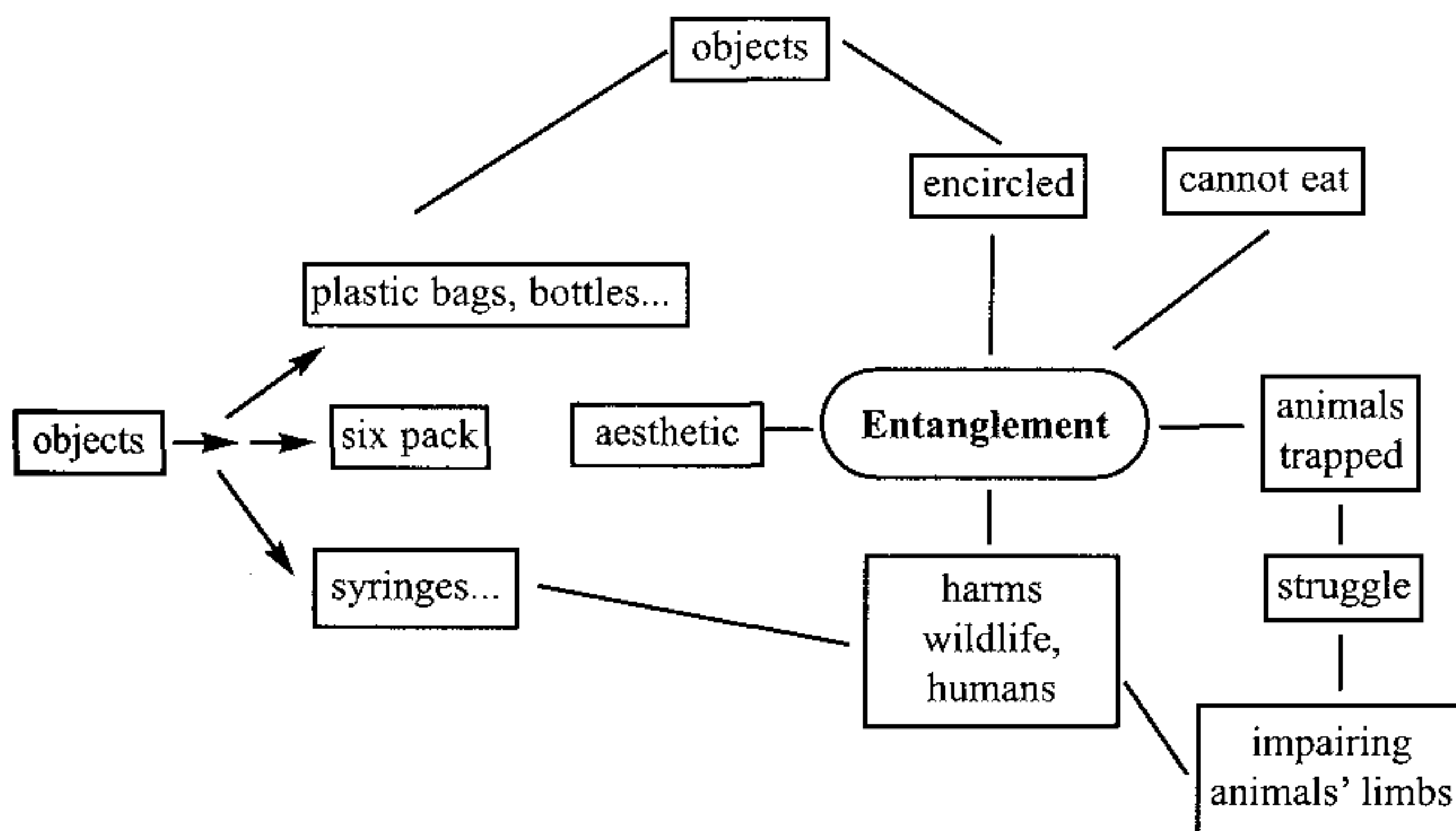
Technique: Clustering

Procedure: (See below)

Step I: Prewriting

This is a step where all those floating ideas acquired during the previous lessons are put onto paper. The word “entanglement” is written on the board. Learners endeavor to think of all lexical items relating to the word (see Diagram 1).

Diagram 1



Step 2: Organizing:

Once the operation of generating ideas is over, learners start off grouping material under headings or titles and decide on the organization of their composition. In our case, it will take the following format:

a-Definition: Animals get trapped or encircled

b-Causes: Objects such as plastic bags, fishing nets, and 6-pack plastic rings

c-Consequences: Harmful:

- wildlife (endangered species, trapped animals, suffocation, impairing limbs, etc)
- to humans (provoke injuries, transmissible diseases etc)
- to beaches (unsightly, unsafe, unclean)

Step 3: Writing:

Entanglement is the main problem posed by marine debris. It results when an animal becomes encircled by debris. It can occur accidentally, or when the animal is attracted to the debris.

Entanglement is harmful to wildlife. It can lead to suffocation, loss of limbs or infection. It can also impair an animal's ability to swim, thus causing drowning.

Entanglement is a hazard to people, especially when the debris washes ashore with rotting carcasses of marine life or discarded medical supplies and paraphernalia (syringes, chemicals, needles, etc). Stepping on these objects may cause injuries or disease. This problem can also affect the economy of the community as polluted beaches may have to close.

In order to establish a secure atmosphere and instill a sense of responsibility, learners should not be forced to use all the information featured in the diagram. They should act upon their own beliefs.

What happens in this writing session is represented in the Appendix (see below).

Conclusion

After careful examination of the Appendix, it becomes amply evident that certain clustering characteristic features are worth being mentioned.

- the task is informed (learners are aware of the learning goal)
- the teacher is no longer the absolute master and transmitter of knowledge to docile learners
- learners are not dealt with as groups but as individuals since each learner has his/her share in the process
- more importantly, perhaps, learners are exposed to a language use situation wherein the major skills are smoothly incorporated. Can we ask for more in a foreign language class?

Appendix

