

PROCESS BASED APPROACH IN ESSAY WRITING

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Abstract:

Process writing is an approach to writing, where language learners focus on the process by which they produce their written products rather than on the products themselves. In the end, learners surely need to and are required to complete their products, yet the writing process itself is stressed more.

Key words: process-based approach, writing process, editing, drafting, revising

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By focusing on the writing process, learners come to understand themselves more, and find how to work through the writing. They may explore what strategies conform to their style of learning. Brown states that writing is a thinking process, a writer produces a final written product based on their thinking after the writer goes through the thinking process [1,18]. In addition, Brown quotes Elbow [3, 16] as saying that writing should be thought of as an organic, developmental process not as a way to transmit a message but as a way to grow and cook a message.

Kroll (1990) also quotes Applebee (1986) as saying that the process approach “provided a way to think about writing in terms of what the writer does (planning, revising, and the like) instead of in terms of what the final product looks like (patterns of organization, spelling, and grammar)” [2, 96].

In the Process approach, learners are looked upon as central in learning, so that learners’ needs, expectations, goals, learning styles, skills and knowledge are taken into consideration. Through the writing process, learners need to make the most of their abilities such as knowledge and skills by utilizing the appropriate help and cooperation of the teacher and the other learners. It encourages learners to feel free to convey their own thoughts or feelings in written messages by providing them with plenty of time and opportunity to reconsider and revise their writing and at each step seek assistance from outside resources like the instructor.

The writing process usually involves several steps. A typical sequence is comprised of three steps: prewriting, drafting, and, revising. Some sequences, however, use four steps, such as thinking, planning, writing, and editing, while others use five steps, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and evaluating. In other words, each writer has a preferred way of approaching the writing process, from simpler to more complex depending on the level of the learners, and the purpose of writing. These steps generally are implemented in sequence, but in process writing the writing process is not necessarily a linear learning process, rather more of a recursive or spiraling process as the learners move around these

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steps, sometimes going forward and retracing their steps. For example, brainstorming, one skill that is important particularly for the prewriting step, can be exercised again and again at different stages if the learner needs new ideas later in the process. Learners can achieve their writing goals through the process in different ways [1, 107].

Currently, the process approach has been generally accepted, and has been widely used, even though many researchers are still doubtful of its effectiveness. Hyland (2003) states that despite considerable research into the writing process, we still do not have a comprehensive idea of how learners go about a writing task or how they learn to write. He goes on to say that it also remains unclear whether an exclusive emphasis on psychological factors in writing will provide the whole picture, either theoretically or pedagogically. It is certain, therefore, that much more research should be completed in order to offer learners better teaching. In reality, classes cannot wait until a perfect approach or method becomes available.

Teachers including myself have to try to find more balanced and eclectic approaches which can motivate the students, and eventually improve their language abilities. For classes, a variety of writing textbooks introduce the process approach, and many writing teachers use the process approach to a varying degree.

The advantage of the process approach is that it is possible to combine several approaches and also incorporate other skills. In order to make the writing class more effective, there are various aspects that teachers may have to consider, such as the proficiency of each student, what the students need or what is necessary for them. For example, some students may need to focus on sentence-level practices, or need to learn how to organize their thoughts, feelings, and opinions logically.

Leki (1992) notes from the research conducted with ESL students that even if students were able to do grammar-based guided compositions, and even if students did have a fairly good grasp of grammar, they still produced peculiar, non-English sounding texts when asked to write more creatively. Grammatical accuracy including spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation does not appear to be enough to master the writing skill. Teachers generally tend to give only vocabulary or sentence level instruction in particular for those who have a low level of proficiency and confidence. Can those students manage so called "free writing"?

The process approach to writing is a teaching strategy that focuses on the recursive and interactive nature of the writing process. It views writing as a complex cognitive activity that involves planning, drafting, reviewing, and revising. The process approach emphasizes the importance of giving students ample time and opportunities to engage in multiple drafts, receive feedback from teachers and peers, and make revisions to their writing. It is a student-centered approach that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration in the writing process. By using the process approach, students can improve their writing skills, overcome writer's block, and produce more effective and polished written work. This approach can be implemented in various educational settings, from elementary to tertiary institutions, and can be facilitated through teacher-student collaborative assessment, online learning environments, and systematic research-based curricula.

The process approach to writing consists of four stages (Badger & White, 2000):

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1. pre-writing
2. drafting
3. revising
4. editing

The main purpose of the pre-writing stage is to provide opportunities for learners to brainstorm ideas on and read around an essay topic. At the drafting stage, learners plan their essay structure and organise their ideas. Then, they start to write the first draft of their essays. At the revising stage, they read their first draft and reorganise their ideas, if necessary. An essay may go through multiple revisions. The final stage is editing. At this stage, learners proof-read their essays, focusing on grammar, punctuation and formatting.

If I say “process” which definition comes to mind?

A document that needs to be in certain format and tells you what to do.

Technical word that has many interpretations depending who uses it.

Technical word for activity with a purpose.

I don't even know what it is.

Whatever your answer was, the reality is that the word “Process” means something different to each individual. It is no wonder that the Phrase “Process-based Approach” is not well understood. To be honest, when we go to different companies as consultants, we have noticed that “Process approach” has taken many shapes and forms in different organizations. So let's try to breaking it down and simplifying it by defining it correctly and showing you the importance of it.

A Process is a something we do to get something done/ completed. A process is an activity that converts an input into an output. Process approach is simply a way of looking at all your activities and thinking of them as sets of inputs and outputs. I like to tell people to think of it as a chain of activities, where one process feeds into the next.

INPUT – PROCESS – OUTPUT

Getting something done – Process

1. We have a need/ want to get it done- this is the TRIGGER.
2. You will need some items to start the activities – this is called INPUT.
3. You will work on it, this is called PROCESS (activities)
4. Once finished with the process you will have a final result, this is called OUTPUT.

As a strong advocate of awareness raising, I believe that learners should be made aware that well-crafted essays cannot be written in one sitting. Also, teachers can introduce the four stages to learners in the classroom.

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