

## THE PROCESS APPROACH IN WRITING SKILL AND ITS TEACHING

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**Abstract:** The article deals with the nature of the writing skill. First, it makes a distinction between writing and speaking in terms of nature and teaching, and then it looks in detail at the exact nature of the writing skill investigating the causes of its difficulty. The second problem is concerned with teaching writing according to the process approach highlighting its various features and problems. Another aspect that is dealt with in this article is peer review which is an important component of the process approach.

**Keywords:** English writing, Process approach, Product approach, confident writers, the composing process, final product, constituents, methods of research

## ПРОЦЕССНЫЙ ПОДХОД В НАВЫКАХ ПИСЬМА И ЕГО ПРЕПОДАВАНИИ

**Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается природа навыка письма. Сначала он проводит различие между письмом и речью с точки зрения природы и преподавания, а затем подробно рассматривает истинную природу навыка письма, исследуя причины его затруднений. Вторая проблема связана с обучением письму на основе процессного подхода с выделением его различных особенностей и проблем. Еще один аспект, рассматриваемый в этой статье, — это экспертная оценка, которая является важным компонентом процессного подхода.

**Ключевые слова:** английское письмо, процессный подход, продуктивный подход, уверенные писатели, процесс написания, конечный продукт, составляющие, методы исследования.

## INTRODUCTION

“Reading and writing are important because we read and write our world, as well as our texts, and are read and written by them. Texts are places where power and weakness are visible and negotiated, where learning and ignorance manifest themselves, where the structures that enable and constrain our thoughts and actions become clear. That is why the subject of the humble “English” is so important. (Scholes, 1985, XI). As English teachers, we strive to help our students become capable, motivated and confident writers. But the problems we face in encouraging our students to write purposefully, instilling in them a passion for writing, and forming writing skills, knowledge, and worldview are significant and exciting. The fact that the social and personal worlds of many of the young people we educate are increasingly shaped and negotiated through written language, delivered as direct written speech that is usually fragmented, disjointed, and usually delivered over a digital platform. Text messaging, Instagram, Twitter, blogging, and other forms of social media (among other things) have become normative channels of identity formation; building and maintaining relationships; defining a person's place in the world; and interact in a myriad of contexts, from the local to the global. Immersed in the possibilities of digital technology, many of our students are fluent and confident in navigating the idiomatic and transactional writing conventions associated with social media and other forms of colloquial online communication. Although it may seem that writing has been replaced by other means, the telephone, tape recorder

or video recording has always been a means of communication. Process approach to the teaching of English Writing has been advocated in contrast with the traditional product-oriented method of teaching writing, and has been generally accepted and applied by English teachers in their classroom teaching of English writing, though controversy occurs occasionally among researchers concerning which P is better, the process approach or the product method. , I think that process approach to teaching writing should be a process including several stages, namely prewriting or invention activities (brainstorming, group discussion, assessing ideas,); drafting; seeking feedback from peers or the instructor; revising on the whole-text level ( looking at the overall focus, reconsidering organization, deciding whether there is enough evidence, etc.); followed by revising at the paragraph or sentence level, proofreading, and “publishing” the final text. In essence, process approach to teaching writing focuses on the writing process rather than the final product.

#### **METHODS AND MATERIALS**

Whether it's in daily writing or formal writing tasks, we still have the ability to devote ourselves to writing. Therefore, like other skills, writing skills should be developed more by second/foreign learners. In fact, many students struggle with writing assignments; however, by developing their writing skills and being confident in what they write, this skill will certainly make writing skills enjoyable for students rather than avoiding them. Nature of Writing. When we write we put words into graphic symbols. But is this what is meant by writing? Certainly not. Byrne [1991, p.1] clearly explains this stating that: writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols have to be arranged, according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences. Similarly, Brown [2001, p. 335] states that the view that writing is graphic symbols is not valid anymore and that it is defied by a major theme in the field of ESL writing, that of "the composing process of writing." Brown (ibid.) explains the nature of writing in terms of written products which: [...] are often the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills...the compositional nature of writing has produced writing pedagogy that focuses students on how to generate ideas, how to organize them cohesively into a written text, how to revise text for clearer meaning, how to edit text for appropriate grammar, and how to produce a final product. Neman (1995) argues that writing can be learned and improved and he provides the following definition: writing is "a craft, an artistic process with techniques and conventions that can be learned, employing skills that can be improved." [p. 4] Many researchers agree on the social nature of writing [Chandler, 1995]. Hayes (1996) argues that writing is social" because it is a social artefact and is carried out in social setting." [p. 5]. Similarly, Zhu (2004) explains this nature of writing in terms of students' roles which have to be social in the first place. Finally, Johns [1990; cited in Gabrielatos, 2002, p. 4] considers the outcome of writing as "a social act".

Language is a whole of four skills that any learner has to master in order to learn that language successfully. However, some scholars believe that these skills should not be considered in the same way. Weigle (2002), reports that educational research prioritizes writing over speaking in the sense that it is" more ' correct' and therefore should be more valued than oral language." [p. 15] Byrne [1991, p. 2] states that what makes writing difficult is that "we are writing for a reader". According to Parrott [2004], the writer has to affect the readers in order to be successful in his/her writing. Byrne (op.cit) further argues that because the reader is not present, we have to put all our effort on writing, the only means available to us, unlike in speaking, additional facilitators as gestures and facial expressions

which would do a lot for us. For this reason we have to learn how to use words in writing as skillfully as possible. In this vein, Byrne (*ibid.*) briefly explains the way we should put our thoughts on paper: "It is by the organization of our sentences into a text, into a coherent whole which is as explicit as possible and complete in itself, that we are able (or hope to be able) to communicate successfully with our reader through the medium of writing." (p. 2).

Li (a writing teacher) [in Tsui, cited in Freeman & Richards, 1996] speculates about the way written expression is often taught in ESL classes and claims that students are not often given the opportunity to see how they came to produce the whole texts, nor are they made aware of the steps of writing. This statement indicates that students are most of the time taught according to the traditional ways of teaching where the most important thing is the outcome of rather than the process through which the learner goes in order to get the predetermined outcome. The perception of writing has changed as recent studies began to focus more on the process that leads to the final product and not on the product itself. [Appellebee, 1984; cited in Freeman & Richards, *ibid.*] In other words, the focus is shifting to "writing as a process." [Crowley, 1998; cited in Matsuda, 2003, p. 68]. This shift would lead to another understanding so far as writing is concerned; it makes use of writing "as a process of creating, discovering, and extending meaning rather than a process of putting down preconceived and well-formed meaning." [Raimes, 1985; Shaughnessy, 1977; Silva, 1990; Zamel, 1983, 1987; in Tsui; cited in Freeman & Richards, *ibid.* p. 97]. Unlike the product approach in which mistakes are seen as inhibiting and, therefore, have to be eliminated, it is the argument that 'students made mistakes because they were allowed to write what they wanted' [Byrne, 1991, p.22]. Thus, for the sake of eliminating errors, the importance of control (of topics) was stressed. The process approach to teaching writing has been applied since the 1970s. In relation to its effects on students' performances, Williams [2003, p. 99] reports: "The percentage of run-on sentences actually increased during this period, as did the percentage of sentence fragments." In this respect, Williams (*ibid.*) argues that "the problem appears to lie in the implementation of process pedagogy, not in the concept itself." [p. 99] The common belief is that "Prior to the advent of the process approach, writing instruction focused on a student's finished product." [Williams, *ibid.* p.100]. When we come to the process approach, it is not that the final product is neglected or not considered at all, only that the learner, being the central focus in this approach, would understand the processes involved in putting ideas on paper. In the first place, the process approach is top-down, and implies that the focus of the instruction would be on "producing entire papers, not on grammar or parts of papers." [Williams, *ibid.* p.101]. In other words, the aim of such instruction is directed towards changing students' general behaviour in order to reach the status of good writers. Williams (*ibid.*) states three factors which would be the key to good writing: (a) asking students to write often in meaningful contexts, (b) providing frequent feedback on work in progress and, (c) requiring numerous revisions based on that feedback. Tribble (1996) defines the process approach as an approach "to the teaching of writing which stresses the creativity of the individual writer, and which pays attention to the development of good writing practices rather than the imitation of models. [p. 160].

As regards the role of teachers in the process approach, the role of the teacher is seen as that of guide and facilitator [Atkinson, 2003]. Tsui [cited in Freeman & Richards, 1996, p. 98] sees that their role should not be that of "assessors, but of facilitators who help students to develop strategies for generating ideas, revising and editing." Similarly, Hyland (*op.cit.*) restricts the role of the teacher in the writing process to guiding students along the stages of writing in order to

avoid focus on form and to give much importance to content and ideas. In addition, the teacher always remains a source of feedback [Bitchener et al, 2005].

## RESULTS

Most people see writing is difficult. Hilton & Hyder (1992, p.7), state that many people "regard writing as a chore: something that is difficult, which you delay or try to avoid". Byrne [1991, p.1] states that most writers be they professional or not "would agree that it is usually neither an easy nor a spontaneous activity." Writing is part of the learning process and can be difficult for students and even "unrewarding and even punishing for some students." [Daly1985; in Tsui; in cited Freeman & Richards, 1996:101]. Another thing is that writing in a FL or L2 is more demanding than writing in one's mother tongue on the basis that the former needs some abilities which may be "less well developed than in one's first language" [Schoonen, 2003, p. 166]. Byrne (op.cit.) discusses three categories of problems which can make writing difficult. The first category is the psychological problems. He highlights the necessity of interaction and feedback and argues that the latter facilitate writing stating that "the fact that we are required to write on our own, without the possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback, in itself makes the act of writing difficult." [Byrne, *ibid.*, p.4]. The second category is the linguistic problems. As has already been stated, speaking has other features as well as words. In writing, however, the situation would be different. Therefore, the absence of helping features requires that we should pay more attention to the selected words and structures so that the produced text can easily be interpreted. (*ibid.*) The third category is the cognitive problems. This concerns the organization of ideas "in such a way that they can be understood by a reader who is not present by a reader who is not known to us." [*ibid.* p.5]. The last cause of difficulty Byrne (*ibid.*) deals with concerns the circumstances when writing is imposed on the learner. Here, the problem is both psychological and cognitive. Winer [1992; cited in Freeman & Richards, *op.cit.*] reports that in his study on student teachers' attitudes towards writing, "dread of writing ... was repeatedly identified as one of the problems." Language is not an independent system that learners can take without involving their feelings and emotions. Brown [2000, p. 144], explains what is meant by language: language is behavior, that is, a phase of human activity which must not be treated in essence as structurally divorced from the structure of nonverbal human activity. The activity of man constitutes a structural whole in such a way that it cannot be subdivided into neat "parts" or "levels" or "compartments" with language in a behavioral compartment insulated in character, content, and organization from other behaviour. This definition of language makes it clear that other factors interfere in second/foreign language learning. According to Arnold & Brown (1999), "the various emotions affecting language learning are intertwined and interrelated in ways that make it impossible to isolate completely the influence of any one of them." [p.8]. The affective domain, with all its constituents, needs careful investigation for a better understanding of its effects on language learning.

Slavin (2003) considers motivation as "one of the most important ingredients of effective instruction." [p.328]. However, it is neither easy to define nor to restrict its sources for it is "a product of many factors, ranging from the student's personality and abilities to characteristics of particular learning tasks, incentives for learning, settings, and teacher behaviours" [p. 329]. Slavin claims that it is the educator's job to sustain students' motivation and "to engage in activities that lead to learning." [p.329]

### CONCLUSION

Writing is a basic skill that foreign language learners must learn together with other skills. Scientists say that this skill is sharply distinguished; therefore, it should be given a different attention. The point is that the transition from writing in an academic context to a non-academic context reveals the social nature of writing, a feature that adds value to this skill. However, some problems, such as: anxiety, lack of motivation, low self-esteem, etc., can make writing difficult for some students and limit their learning opportunities. CLL is a method that has recently proven to offer key solutions to students' writing problems (anxiety, confidence, motivation, etc.). Therefore, the method of teaching this skill should be reconsidered and given another importance for its infinite and inevitable importance in learning English.

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