

EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF ESL/EFL WRITING

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8431809>

Abstract. *This study assesses teaching writing skills to the second language learners by utilizing benchmarking strategies of classroom. The study has used mixed approach of analysis to evaluate learning and writing skills of second language. This paper highlights some prominent approaches to ESL/EFL writing that have taken place; starting from earlier approaches, such as form-dominated approach, writer-focused approach, content-based approach, and reader oriented approach, followed by collaborative approach, computer-assisted, and lastly social media approach as the state of the art. Advantages and weaknesses of each approach were elaborated.*

Keywords: *second language, brainstorming, perceptions of students, writing skill, process approach.*

Writing requires a certain level of creativity and critical thinking. It is not simply about putting words on paper, but about conveying a message or idea in a clear and effective manner. This requires the ability to organize thoughts, analyze information, and make decisions about what to include or exclude from the writing. In addition, writing is a process that involves multiple drafts and revisions. It is rare for a writer to produce a perfect piece of writing on the first try. Instead, writing requires constant refinement and improvement through editing and rewriting. Writing is a complex and challenging task that requires a combination of skills, knowledge, and imagination. However, with practice and dedication, anyone can improve their writing abilities and become an effective communicator.

As Harmer (1998) points out, the writing skill has finally been recognized as an important skill for language learning. He lays stress on the essentiality of the writing skill saying “The reasons for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language include reinforcement, language development, learning style, and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right” (p.79). Writing is indeed becoming necessary not only in L2 in school settings, but also in our daily life, particularly owing to the prevalence of information technology, such as writing e-mail, or business letters overseas.

Learners must also be able to recognize whether a noun is singular or plural. This involves understanding the formation of plural nouns (e.g., adding "-s" or "-es") and irregular nouns with unique plural forms.

Writing is also, like reading, an unnatural act. Learning to speak is instinctive, reading and writing is not. It takes learning and practice to reproduce the sounds of language into written code with a pencil or a keyboard. Writing is also very different from speaking in which there is a direct social relationship between people. We usually know those people we speak with and they can ask us questions or ask us to clarify what we have said. With writing we may not know the reader at all. Hence writing involves our imagination as well. We have to imagine that we are having a

special kind of conversation (which we write down) with a person who is not actually there. We have to imagine who that person is and why we are writing for that person.

Learners need to acquire appropriate strategies for each component of the writing process (Graham S., Perin D. (2007).

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. One criticism of the process approach is that it can be time-consuming and inefficient. Some argue that focusing on multiple drafts and revisions can lead to a lack of productivity and hinder students from producing more writing in a shorter amount of time. Another criticism is that the process approach may not be suitable for all learners. Some students may prefer a more structured and formulaic approach to writing, while others may struggle with the open-ended nature of the process approach. Additionally, some have argued that the process approach places too much emphasis on the writer's individual experience and creativity, rather than on the rules and conventions of the language. This can lead to a lack of attention to grammar, spelling, and other important aspects of writing. Despite these criticisms, the process approach remains a popular and effective method for teaching writing to ESL learners. Its focus on individualized instruction, critical thinking, and revision can help students develop their writing skills and become more confident communicators in English.

The main concern that people have with the process approach is that it pays less attention to grammar and structure, and puts little importance on the final products. Reid (2001), however, expounds on this phenomenon as follows:

[in the 1980s, they developed] a false dichotomy between „process“ and „product classrooms in the L2 pedagogy. Process teachers encourage students to use their internal resources and individuality. . . they neglected accuracy in favor of fluency. In contrast, it was suggested that product teachers focused solely on accuracy, appropriate rhetorical discourse and linguistic patterns to the exclusion of writing processes. . . In reality, most L2 students were being taught process writing strategies to achieve effective written communication (products), with differences occurring in emphasis. (p. 29).

There are many other concerns among those who are involved in ESL writing. Leki (1992), for example, indicates three main limitations; few ESL teachers receive specific training to teach writing, many ESL teachers are not likely to abandon more traditional views, and both NES and NNS (Non Native Speakers) teachers and researchers consider the process approach to focus too insistently on personal experience. In addition, as Horowitz (1986) asserts, some people think that the process approach is unrealistic because it puts too much emphasis on multiple drafts which may cause ESL students to fail the academic exams with their single draft restrictions (as cited by Leki, 1992).

Overall, it is important for teachers to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and choose the most appropriate one for their students. The process approach may not be suitable for all learners, but it can be a valuable tool for those who need individualized instruction and support in developing their writing skills. By incorporating different approaches

and techniques, teachers can create a well-rounded and effective writing curriculum for ESL learners.

In addition, teachers should provide clear and specific feedback to students throughout the writing process to help them improve their skills. This feedback should focus on both the content and the language aspects of writing. Peer review and collaboration can also be effective tools for improving writing skills, as they allow students to receive feedback from their peers and learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Overall, the process approach can be a valuable tool for teaching writing to ESL learners, but it should be used with flexibility and tailored to meet the needs and preferences of individual students. By incorporating different approaches and techniques, providing clear feedback, and encouraging collaboration, teachers can help their students develop strong writing skills that will serve them well in their academic and professional lives.

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