A Program Based on the Integration of Product-Process Approach in Teaching Writing in Al-Balqa Applied University

Serene Mousa Jubran *

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of using a program based on the integration of product-process approach in teaching English writing for Jordanian learners of English as a foreign language at Al-Balqa Applied University/Princess Alia University College. For the purpose of the study, a pre/post-test was built to measure learners' level in English writing before/after conducting the study. The researcher adopted an eclectic approach to the teaching of writing by synthesizing the strength of the two popular approaches for the implementation in the EFL classroom. The sample of the study was selected randomly and consisted of (90) junior learners from English language department at Princess Alia University College in the second semester 2014/2015. The sample was divided into three sections; one experimental group and two control groups. The study lasted for one semester (13 weeks). Subjects were pre-and post-tested on essay writing. The obtained data were analyzed using the ANCOVA. The findings of the study indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the post-test between the two control groups and the experimental group in favor of the experimental group. 

Keywords: Process Approach, Product approach, writing, EFL, Al-Balqa’ Applied University.

Introduction

Writing is the most difficult skill because it requires; organizing ideas clearly, using correct grammar, appropriate punctuation, correct spelling, and arranging their paragraphs into cohesive and coherent texts. More importantly, writing is essential to be mastered by all ESL learners for all levels because it determines their success or failure in writing in English. Recently, the teaching of writing for ESL learners has become a field of increasing interest at Jordanian Universities specially the academic writing which varies with the different courses taken in the English Departments. Many learners after learning English for years usually end in failure when required to compose pieces of writing for different topics related to their research fields in English, and their level of writing competency seems to be lower than expected. Arab learners take it for granted that writing is just a process of translating Arabic words and meaning to another language. Furthermore, learners lack motivation to write in English even though writing is an obligatory course for English Language learners in most Jordanian Universities. Therefore, it is not so strange that learners are not able to write a piece of English writing in harmony to the context in which writing is produced. Most English professors are frustrated when correcting learners’ paragraphs or essays which are full of mistakes and out of content and context.

These problems led researchers to find the suitable approach to teach writing in order to develop learners’ writing ability in English and to be more capable to meet their needs to a particular context and a particular research field.

1.1. Writing Approaches

Over time, there have been many approaches to the teaching of writing in the history of language teaching which led to several shifts in the field.

Despite the importance of these approaches in teaching writing skills, the researcher’s experience in the field of teaching English writing makes her feel that English Language learners find difficulties in the type of writing they produced. Most professors emphasize on
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either product or process approaches in teaching writing to university learners. The researcher will adopt an eclectic approach to the teaching of writing by synthesizing the strength of the two popular approaches for the implementation in the ESL classroom.

The researcher analyzed points of the strength and weakness of each approach and incorporate each approach by using this program that finds the two approaches are largely complementary. Therefore, using the suggested integrated approach has the main purpose of enabling university learners to transfer the skills they have gained from each approach naturally from one mode to another and thus to produce their writing tasks efficiently. Also, this integration will help learners to develop their writing and will help learners to write rather than simply copy.

2. Theoretical Background of the Study

Both the product approach and the processes approach have their benefits and drawbacks. Advocates of the Behaviorist theory and language teaching theoreticians (e.g., Hairston, 1982; Raimes, 1983; Mitchell and Myles (2004); Myles, 2002; Silva and Brice, 2004) assert that writing is a supporting skill of grammar classes. For them, writing classes are to focus and emphasize on sentence structure and syntax. Therefore, the product approach is a traditional approach that focuses on writing tasks in which learners were encouraged to mimic a model text.

In the literature, the advantages and the disadvantages of using the product approach in teaching ESL writing are many. Advocates of this approach believe that this approach enhances learners’ writing proficiency and reinforces their writing in terms of grammatical and syntactical forms which could in turn affect positively learners writing proficiency (Myles, 2002; Steel, 2004). Another advantage is the product approach which involves analyzing, strict imitating, and manipulating of linguistic rules of modeled texts. This imitation raises learners' awareness and helps them to learn and develop their grammatical structures (Pincas, 1982; Ferris, 2010; Richards and Rogers, 2002; Rodgers, 2014).

A final advantage is that the strong emphasis on linguistic knowledge will help learners to have an idea about the organization of every modeled text (Badger and White 2000).

On the contrary, opponents of the product approach argue that one of the disadvantages of this approach is that little attention is given to writing purpose and audience (Hyland 2003). Since the instructor gives great attention and overemphasizes to the linguistic knowledge, learners are de-motivated and worried about the communicative purpose and audience of their writing. Another argument is that the product approach kills learners’ writing creativity, and it was given little consideration since this approach focuses heavily on reproducing the model text in terms of structure, mechanics, and linguistic knowledge (Hyland, 2003). A final argument is that the product approach is a teacher-centered and ignores the social nature of writing (Foo, 2007). In this approach, interaction between a teacher and learners or between learners themselves does not exist due to emphasis on the final product (Kim and Kim, 2005).

On the other hand, advocates of cognitive theory and language teaching theoreticians (e.g., Tribble, 1990; Boughey, 1997; Hyland, 2003; O’Brien, 2004) view writing as the discovery of meaning and how a text is written. For them, writing is a dynamic process and recursive procedure of the following stages: prewriting, drafting, revising and editing. During these stages, cognitive strategies such as problem-solving are needed to facilitate working of the process (Sun, and Feng, 2009).

Like most approaches, the process approach has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of using the process approach in teaching ESL writing are many. The most obvious advantage of this approach, as its advocate claim, is that it provides learners with multi drafting and feedback from the teacher or peers during the writing process starting from collecting ideas to their final drafts. Through drafting and redrafting, the learners receive feedback from the teacher or peer consultation, and he/she can revise his/her piece of writing accordingly. This feedback and revising will help learners to improve and develop their writing skills through building up a problem-solving strategy to generate solutions and organize their ideas into a cohesively written text (Rodgers, 2014). Another advantage of the process approach is that writing in this approach is more global because readers and audiences are emphasized which could in turn give significance to the writing activity (White and Arndt, 1991; Carter and Nunan, 2001). Finally, the teacher in this
approach plays the role of a facilitator and provides guidance. Through the writing process teachers guide and help learners to develop effective writing strategies and ways to convey meaning. In such classrooms, writing is essentially learnt and not taught since the teacher’s task is only to facilitate the exercise of writing skills and draw out the learners’ potential. The process approach is thus learner-centered and emphasizes the role of the learners as an independent producer of texts (Seow, 2002; Walsh, 2004; Wingate, 2012).

Despite the fact that the process approach emphasizes learners’ independence, it has its drawbacks (Bazerman, 1980; Thulasi, Salam, and Ismail, 2014). One of these drawbacks is writing being produced by the same set of processes. Second, the process approach does not provide learners sufficient input of linguistic knowledge to write successfully (Badger and White, 2000). A final and serious disadvantage of the process approach is time-consuming especially in large classes. In such classes, teachers have not enough time for every learner for writing conferences.

A survey of researches related to the problem under investigation revealed that there were positive results regarding the impact of using the product-process approach on students’ writing. The findings of researches (Casanave, 1998; Chen, 2005; Foo, 2007; Heah and Kathpalia, 2010) emphasized on integrating the product-process approach because both are important in the teaching of writing. They added that teachers should create a balance between grammatical structures and cognitive processes for the meaning will not be conveyed unless using accurate grammar.

Although the process approach has become more popular than the product approach among L2 writing instructors, it is not always easy to choose the appropriate one for L2 writing instruction. Some researchers have compared the advantages and disadvantages of these two approaches (Han, 2001; Zhang & Zhou, 2002; Chen, 2005). Chen (2005) even carried out an experiment to find out which was the better one. The results of his study showed that the product approach was suitable for learners of the lower proficiency and the process approach was suitable for those of the higher proficiency. Chen then suggested we should take proficiency of our students into consideration when selecting an instruction approach.

2.2. Process-product approach in teaching academic writing

Most English instructors of EFL learners believe that learners need to acquire accuracy as well as fluency in order to write and communicate correctly in English. As it was mentioned earlier the strengths and the weaknesses of each approach show that both approaches complement rather than opposing each other, and the instructors have to integrate the strengths of both approaches to enhance the teaching of writing. A suggested way for instructor to start is to adopt the strengths of one approach and then combine it with the strengths of the other approach (Dyer, 1996; Han, 2001; Ghabool, Mariann, and Hossein, 2012). For example, instructors can make use of the interaction in the process of meaning discovery as well as having a reader as a part of producing the written product. Instructors should combine the strengths of the rhetorical organizations of the product approach in order to teach learners to write according to a variety of organizational conventions. Accuracy is important, and one cannot deny it in language learning. In addition, ignoring grammatical elements the process approach does not help learners to satisfy the purpose of writing. This integration of the two approaches will help learners to use the appropriate rhetorical conventions through learners’ interaction for a reader while producing their piece of writing.

3. Questions of the study

1- Are there any statically significant differences in the third year students’ essay writing between the experimental group and the first control group exposed to the product approach?

2- Are there any statically significant differences in the third year students’ essay writing between the experimental group and the second control group exposed to the process approach?

4. Methodology

4.1. Sample

The subjects for the study were 93 students enrolled in Advanced Writing course in their third year during the first semester of the 2014/2015 academic year. These subjects were randomly chosen and divided into three groups: an experimental group and two control groups. All subjects’ major were English Language.

4.2. Materials

The instructional materials for the three groups were
all lessons drawn from Writing Academic English by Alice Obsima and Ann Hogue (1999).

2.3. Instruments

Two essay writing tests were used in this study. One was used as a pretest and the other one as a posttest. Learners of the first control group were required to write an accurate essay to the best of their knowledge. While learners of the second control group, were asked to write a coherent essay. While students of the experimental group were asked to write an accurate and coherent essay as much as they can. Before administrating the two tests, their validity was established by three university teachers specialized in teaching writing.

2.4. Procedures

At the beginning of the experiment, the three groups were pretested on academic essay writing on one of the topics in the text book. The three groups were taught by the researcher at the rate of three sessions a week. Students of the first control group were taught academic essay writing using the product approach. In the second control group, students were taught academic essay writing using the process approach. Students of the experiment group were taught academic essay writing using the product-process approach. The study lasted for 13 weeks, three sessions per week. At the end of the experiment, all students were post tested on academic essay writing. The pre and post tests were analyzed using the SPSS version 16.

2.5. Scoring

The three post-tests of the three groups were scored independently from each other. The post test of all groups was scored using El-Koumy’s scoring scale for writing and El-Koumy’s writing process checklist.

3. Results and discussion

The obtained data were analyzed using the ANCOVA. The level of significance was set at the 0.05 level.

Post-test results

Table (1): The differences between the mean scores on the post-test between the first control group and the experimental group on the quality of writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>. 23.042</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.042</td>
<td>1.379</td>
<td>.245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>952.458</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16.710</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>975.650</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (1) shows that there are no statically differences at the level of (.05) between the mean scores of the first control group and the experimental group where F= .013, p=.908 > .05. This result is due to the fact that the instructor of the first control group used the product approach, and as it was mentioned earlier the product approach focuses on the grammatical structure of the sentences. Another possible explanation of this result is the instructor of the experimental group used the product approach integrated with the process approach.

Table (2): The differences between the mean scores on the posttest between the first control group and the experimental group on the quantity of writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>6.962</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.962</td>
<td>.541</td>
<td>.465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>130.890</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>130.890</td>
<td>10.164</td>
<td>.002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>734.005</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>12.877</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>872.983</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (2) shows that there were statically significant differences between the first control group and the experimental group on the quantity of writing in favor of the experimental group where F=10.146, p=.002< .05. One explanation for this result is the instructor of the first control group focuses on the quality of writing rather than the quantity. Another explanation for this result is since the structure is the most important thing, students do not know how to elaborate and develop their thoughts.
through using the product approach.

**Table (3): The differences between the mean scores on the post-test between the second control group and the experimental group on the quantity of writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>23.619</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.619</td>
<td>1.574</td>
<td>.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>6.444</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.222</td>
<td>.215</td>
<td>.807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>840.055</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected</td>
<td>874.933</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>874.933</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (3) shows that there are no statically significant differences between the second control group and the experimental group on the quantity of writing where $f=.215$, $p=.807>.005$. This is due to the fact that the instructor of the second control group used the process approach which focuses on quantity of students’ writing and the development of their ideas and thoughts.

**Table (4): The differences between the mean scores on the posttest between the second control group and the experimental group on the quality of writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pre</td>
<td>9.711</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.711</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>.379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group</td>
<td>148.444</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>74.222</td>
<td>6.022</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>690.249</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12.326</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected</td>
<td>845.333</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>845.333</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table (4) shows that there were statically significant differences between the second control group and the experimental group on the quality of writing in favor of the experimental group where $f=6.022$, $p=.004<.05$. One explanation for this result is the instructor of the second control group does not pay attention to structure as much as the flow and development of ideas.

The findings of the previous results indicated that the product approach alone had overemphasized on the structure and led to an improvement in the quality of students’ writing, but students were not able to improve in the quantity of their writing. Therefore, this finding suggested that the product approach led to accuracy in students’ writing in terms of; grammar, sentences types, and combining them. Also, all students were improved in their writing whether they were within average or below average (Hayland, 2003; Thulasi, Ferris, 2010, Salam, and Ismail, 2014). On the other hand, the findings also suggested that the second control group that exposed to process approach improved in quantity of writing and the approach did not lead to any improvement in the quality of writing. As Hammer and Dusek (2005) indicated that fluency in writing does not lead to accuracy. On the contrary, the improvement of the experimental group was both in quality and quantity of writing. The reason behind this, students view grammar in this approach as dynamic as a formal framework of writing for the learner and the creative use of language by the learner (Chen, 2005; Kim, 2005). Moreover, students of the experimental group recognize the role of grammar in conveying the meaning properly.

In light of the results of this study, the researcher suggests that integrating the product approach with the process approach will enhance students’ writing in both levels: grammar and ideas. Most Jordanian students when taking composition courses focus on structures and final pieces of writing rather than how these pieces of writing are produced and the development of ideas. So, teachers and instructors have to help their students in how to use the structures to convey ideas properly. Also, they have to prepare them to write for audiences outside the classroom.

**Conclusion**

Writing is an important and essential skill for EFL student although it is difficult to achieve. Over years, different methods had been used in the Arab countries on how to teach writing. The product approach was questioned by educators, and they solve this by integrating the product approach with the process approach. Both have advantages and disadvantages, but they made valuable influence to the writing classroom and their techniques became useful in the teaching of writing. The product–process approach provides students with assignments that link organization, ideas, syntax, meaning, revising, and thinking as well. Moreover, this integration of the product and process approach will help learners to achieve better writing ability.
Recommendations

In light of the results of this study, the researcher offers the following recommendations for university instructors:

1- Develop students’ awareness of writing skills by encouraging them to practice writing by using the process and product approach.
2- Integrate other skills with writing.
3- Replicate the study with different learners’ level.
4- The ultimate purpose of students’ writing in higher education should be improve students’ learning rather than prove it.

Implications

Since Academic English writing was found to promote students’ writing competence, the integration of approaches is essential to advance students towards better Academic writing skills. Such integration can be implemented through several tasks such as to pause to scan and read during writing as well as to read each other’s writing and respond to it. Also, instructors can ask students to describe how they planned what to write, when they reread, revised, and edited.

REFERENCES

أثر استخدام برنامج قائم على طريقة التكامل التي تعتمد على المنتج في تدريس الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة البلقاء التطبيقية

سيرين موسى جبران

ملخص

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التعرف على أثر استخدام برنامج قائم على طريقة التكامل التي تعتمد على المنتج في تدريس الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة البلقاء التطبيقية. غرض الدراسة، تم بناء اختباري وعندئذً ليقابل مستوى المتقدمين في الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية قبل / بعد إجراء الدراسة. اعتمد الباحث على النهج التفاعلي لتدريس الكتابة عن طريق تجميع نقاط القوة لكل من الطريقتين لاستخدامها في تدريس الكتابة كلغة أجنبية. تم اختيار عينة الدراسة (90 طالباً) تتكون من (90) متعلمين في كلية اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية الأميره عائشة الجامعة في الفصل الدراسي الثاني 2014/2015، تم تقسيم العينة إلى ثلاثة مجموعات (مجموعتان متبادلة و مجموعة تجريبية). واستمرت الدراسة لمدة 13 أسبوعاً، وقد تم تحليل البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها باستخدام ANCOVA، وأظهرت النتائج الدراسة إلى وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في الاختبار الفعلي بين المجموعات لصالح المجموعة التجريبية.

الكلمات الدالة: طريقة الخطوات - طريقة النتاج - الكتابة - اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية - جامعة البلقاء التطبيقية.