

Investigating the Effectiveness of Process Approach For Teaching Essay Writing To BS Level Students of Islamic Learning Faculty.

Prof.M. Safdar Bhatti

Abstract

The current study discusses the importance of teaching of English in Pakistan. As far teaching English, many approaches/methodologies have been applied. This study has discussed the effectiveness of Process Approach for teaching Essay Writing at BS level. The study has been conducted in the city Bahawalpur. The researcher has used qualitative method of research and has used a structured questionnaire based on survey to collect the concerned information on the topic. He collected the data from all the departments of Islamic Learning Faculty of The IUB and The Govt. College Women University, Bahawalpur where process approach has been used partially or fully. The data has been analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher has drawn the conclusion of the study and has also given some suggestions at the end of the study.

Key Words

English skills, writing skill, essay writing, process approach.

Visiting Professor The Islamia University Bahawalpur

Introduction

In Pakistan, the desire to acquire English is the result of perceptions about its status as an elite language and its role as a gate keeper to power domains. To enhance the development of English language in the country and to help Pakistanis to gain international acceptability, English is being used in schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities nationwide. It is an important core subject from school to university curriculum and students have to qualify the compulsory subject of English to achieve almost all the degrees at masters and bachelor level. Furthermore for job seekers, it is essential to present themselves as competent users of English.

Now talking about four basic skills of English language, writing is the most interactive of all. This might be because it is least natural in the sense that it has to be learnt, i.e. the process starts later and it may not have been the child's natural ability behind it. Writing is a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete.

Harmer (1998) points out that 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 reason for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language includes reinforcement, language development, learning style, and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right".

Teaching writing is often considered teaching grammar. Recently, the teaching of writing has moved away from a concentration on written product to an emphasis on the process of writing. 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.

Research conducted in the late 1970s by Donald Graves, Janet Emig and others led to a focus on the process, rather than solely the product of writing. 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.

The entire focus of this present study is on the effectiveness of process approach in teaching essay writing in English.

Background of the Study

Traditionally, writing was considered as transcribed speech. It was often assumed that the acquisition of spoken proficiency had to take precedence over the learning of written language, and that students would be able to write once they 'mastered' spoken language and orthographic conventions but writing itself is very important to be learnt. Now a days, teaching how to write is more important. The process approach is very useful for teaching essay writing. In this approach, students are

trained to generate ideas for writing, to think the purpose and audience and to write multiple drafts in order to present written products that communicate their own ideas. In the end, the learners surely need and are required to complete their products yet the process writing itself is stressed more. By focusing on the writing process, learners come to understand themselves more and find how to work through writing. They may explore what strategies confirm to their style of learning. In this manner they learn how to write.

Significance of the Study

It is observed that at the end of the course, students fail to write application, letter, summarize the given matter, open a savings account in the bank, respond to advertisements, telephonic conversation, transferring information from non – verbal presentation to verbal presentation and vice-versa. They can hardly express their views, feelings and ideas through writing. It is a fact that the result of English subject is not more than 40 percent in the examination.

After making review of the concerned area, some basic questions arose in the mind of the researcher. How does a teacher develop good writing skills among the learners? What are the reasons behind the student's failure in writing competence? What relationship does exist between conventional methods and process approach? How does the process approach help the learners to develop adequate competence in written English? What are the strategies, devices

and techniques required for developing learner's writing competence in English? Such questions were lurking in the mind of the investigator. In order to find out the answer of these questions, the researcher decided to conduct a research in this area.

Research Objectives

Major objectives of the study were as under:

1. To investigate the teachers' attitude about new teaching methodologies.
2. To explore the teachers' practices in enhancing the effectiveness of their teaching.
3. To get the teachers' opinion about the practice of process approach in instruction.
4. To investigate the teachers' practice of process approach.
5. To measure the effectiveness of process approach in teaching of essay writing.
6. To furnish the recommendation for motivating students to acquire the skills to write a good essay.

Research Statement

Pakistan is a multi-lingual country. To get through the challenge of learning English, the teachers are applying

different methods of teaching and modern approaches. Some teachers are practicing the traditional methods but many teachers are focusing on newly emerged methods to get better results. The research premise of the present study is grounded on the assumption that the process approach is more effective than other approaches in teaching of essay writing in English.

Literature Review

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and students face certain problems in teaching and learning writing. As many teachers of English in China have noted, acquiring the writing skill seems to be more laborious and demanding than acquiring the other three skills (Zheng 1999). In fact, Nunan (1999, 271) considers it an enormous challenge to produce “a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing” in one’s second language. This is magnified by the fact that the rhetorical conventions of English text – the structure, style, and organization – often differ from the conventions in other languages. It requires effort to recognize and manage the difference (Leki, 1991).

The Process Oriented Approach came into being because of the inadequacies of the model approach. Oluwadiya (1992) says scholars like (Kuhn 1970, Emig 1971, Perl 1979, Hayes and Flower 1980, Graves 1982 and Flower 1985) sought to find out how competent writers write so that the kind of the thinking that precedes such writers’ writing can be determined and then taught to the student writers.

Another view of writing is that writing is ‘decontextualized’ (Ellis, 1994: 188) because it assumes that written communication never takes place in the presence of the writer and the reader. According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996) and Matsuda (1997), writing is “far from decontextualized because every writing task is situated in a rhetorical context, involving complex inter-relationships among various elements of writing: the writer, the reader, the text and reality”. As far Canale and Swain (1980), they defined writing as “a manifestation of, as well as the process of manifesting, sociolinguistic, strategic and grammatical competencies mediated by the use of orthographic system” (cited in Silva & Matsuda, 2002).

As far Byrne (1988), one of several authors on writing skills, makes the important point that writing is the process of encoding (putting your message into your words) carried out with a reader in mind. Nevertheless, it is likely that, in the great majority of situations, our students still write primarily for their teachers, or perhaps for an examiner, both acting in the role of evaluators. Grant (1987) makes the very useful point that, “although transferring real life writing directly to the classroom is problematic, what we should be aiming at is at least the creation of plausible context” (cited in McDonough & Shaw, 1993).

Moreover, writing, in language teacher’s opinions, is “a language skill which is difficult to acquire” (Tribble, 1996). It “normal requires some form of instruction” and “is not a skill that is readily picked up by exposure” (Tribble, 1996). Besides,

writing is also “a process that occurs over a period of time, particularly if we take into account sometimes the extended periods of thinking that precedes creating an initial draft” (Harris, 1993) (cited in Phung, 2004).

Process approach according to Pica (1986) focuses on the writer’s potential for- correction as a means of achieving success in writing. It places on the students the task of revision at the expense of imitation of perfect work of experts. Vanessa Steele defines the process approach as focusing more on the varied classroom activities which promotes the development of language use; brainstorming, group discussion, re-writing.

Brown (2001) states that writing is a thinking process; a writer produces a final written product based on his thinking after the writer goes through the thinking process. In addition, Brown quotes Elbow (1973) as saying that writing should be thought as an organic development 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 “provides 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”.

In process writing, the teacher moves away from being someone who sets students a writing topic and receives the finished product for correction without any intervention in the writing process itself.

Research Design

The current study proceeded according to the following procedure. The research design for the study was the survey method using structured questionnaire for concerned persons. On the basis of literature review, a questionnaire was formulated. The data was collected from the English teachers of BS level in eminent Govt. and Semi Govt. institutes of Bahawalpur City where process approach has been practiced fully or partially. Due to shortage of time and finance the study was delimited to the educational institutes in Bahawalpur (main city). For the research study data was collected through a structured questionnaire for teachers. To interpret and draw the conclusion, the collected data was analyzed through SPSS (version 15.0). Researcher has selected qualitative type of research methodology for the current study. A questionnaire based survey was conducted.

Research Participants

The researcher visited different educational institutes to have a firsthand knowledge about the syllabus and the teaching methodology for teaching of English applied there. Then the researcher selected the institutes where process approach was being adopted partially or fully for teaching English and specifically for teaching Essay Writing.

Selection of the institutes was made according to the syllabus applied there. The researcher selected the institutes using purposive sampling for the population of the study. The

selected institutes were easily accessible for the researcher as they were situated in his hometown Bahawalpur. All the English teachers working in the selected institutes were included in the study.

Selected Institutes

The following institutes were selected for the survey:

1. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
2. The Govt. College Women University, Bahawalpur

Survey Instrument

Questionnaire has been considered as an appropriate survey tool for collecting required information by many researchers, so the researcher also has selected questionnaire as his survey tool. He devised a questionnaire after a careful study of the instruments available on the relevant studies.

Data Collection

The researcher personally visited the selected institutes for the purpose of data collection. A structured questionnaire was distributed among 65 English Teachers working in the selected institutes for the study. Out of 65, 50 completed and accurately filled questionnaires were returned and the response rate was remained 77 %.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The collected data was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 15.0. The researcher used Descriptive statistics i.e. frequencies, percentages to measure the variables.

Response on Teaching of Essay Writing

The first part of the questionnaire consisted on questions about personal information of the respondents. They were asked to response about their gender, age group, academic qualifications and teaching experience.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted on the questions about the teaching of Essay Writing in English. Different questions were asked on the topic which covered different aspects of teaching of essay writing. They were asked whether they found the teaching of essay writing difficult than teaching other items. They were further asked about the strategies which they used for teaching. Besides they were asked whether they use new techniques in their teaching or not. Most of the teachers told that they use new techniques with the existing ones to get better results. The teachers were of the view that new emerging techniques and methods are beneficial for effective teaching. The traditional methods alone are not effective now days. The response of the respondents to the questions has been described here through figures and description of the figures.

The third part of the questionnaire consisted on opinions about teaching of essay writing through process approach. Teachers were asked different questions regarding the details about using

process approach in the class. They were asked whether different parts of the essay are important or only starting and ending are important. Whether they consider cohesion and coherence necessary in an essay or it is important only in stories. Further, some questions were made on the comprehension of the students if enhanced with process approach or not. Their opinion was also asked for the point that learning essay writing through process approach affects students' future progress. They were also asked to give opinion about different parts of the essay. The response of the respondents has been described in demographic and descriptive way.

1. The teacher's attitude towards new teaching methodologies

As per study conclusion, there is a dire need to change the traditional methods of teaching of English. To cope with the modern needs, the children are required to have a more practical outlook of the studies. They do not need good grades in exams only rather they are in need to utilize their knowledge in the hour of need. For the above mentioned reasons, the teachers were agreed to the point of practicing the new emerging methodologies in their teaching.

2. The teacher's practices in enhancing the effectiveness of their teaching (i.e. use of AV Aids)

It was determined that the teachers who use some AV aids to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching, get better results. Most of the teachers agreed to the point that AV Aids are

helpful in teaching. To cope with the modern needs, the teacher cannot rely on cramming as he/she cannot put the vast knowledge in the student's mind. He/she is required to adopt a way through which the students get such training as they may be able to face any new situation easily.

3. The teacher's opinion about the practice of process approach in the class room situation

When the teachers were asked to give opinion about the use of process approach in class room situation for teaching, majority of them favored the opinion. The ratio of objection to the effectiveness was 00%. Further most of the respondents found the process approach as helpful in class room situation.

4. The teacher's practice of process approach

When asked about the teacher's own practice of process approach, the data revealed that there was no teacher who does not use it at all. On the other hand, 34 % teachers used this approach on constant basis. So the teachers opined in favor of the use of process approach in their class.

5. The effectiveness of process approach in teaching of essay writing

As the major population was in favor of the use of process approach when they were asked about the effectiveness of the process approach in teaching of essay writing they responded in positive manner. Different questions were included in the questionnaire about the practice of process approach in the

teaching of essay writing. The response was positive on most of the inquiries. Only a minor ratio of the respondents (2 %) disagreed that focusing on different parts of the essay does not enhance the quality of the final product. However the rest of the population agreed to the statement. Same like opinion was expressed about the starting and ending of the essays. The researcher came to the finding that properly planned starting and ending of the essay gets better understanding on the student's part.

Suggestions/Recommendations

After reading the relevant data available on the topic and conducting the study, the researcher has come to the point that teaching is a multi-dimensional field of practice and the teachers practicing in the field should have to be kept in touch with the changes occurring in the field.

A teacher can bring positive changes in the students' behavior and enhance the learning speed of the students by applying new techniques and he/she has to be a student himself/herself. It is rightly said that a teacher is a constant learner because he not only learns for himself but also for his students.

After conducting the study, the researcher has some suggestions for the teachers and the students which may be helpful for further studies in the field.

- Teachers should play a vital role in the learning of their students, they should transmit practical knowledge.

- Teachers should practice modern techniques and methodologies for teaching and learning items should be presented in an interesting way.
- AV Aids should be used in the classroom on regular basis.
- Process approach should be adopted to teach the essay writing.
- Writing the rough draft and then improve after reading is a process that builds students' confidence and they learn more enthusiastically. So it should be practiced frequently.
- Students should be prepared for independent writing so that they feel it easy in practical life writings.

Conclusion

Thus it is said that in the Process approach, learners are looked upon as central in learning, so the learners' needs, expectations, goals, learning style, skills and knowledge are taken into consideration. Through writing process, learners need to make the most of their abilities such as knowledge and skills by utilizing the appropriate help and co-operation of the teacher and the other learners. Process approach is really helpful in teaching essay writing.

References

- 1 Zheng, Y. (1999). Providing the students with effective feedback in the writing process. *Teaching English in China* (36), 41- 45.
- 2 Silva, T. & Matsuda, P. K. (2002). *Writing in N. Schmitt: an introduction to applied linguistics*. London: Arnold.
- 3 Rehman, T. (1996). *Language and Politics in Pakistan*. Karachi: Oxford University Press
- 4 Pica, T. (1986). *An International Approach to the teaching of writing*. USA: States Educational Press.
- 5 Nunan, D. (2001). *Second English Teaching and Learning*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- 6 Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.
- 7 Murray, D. (1990). *Write to Learn*, Holt. New York: Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- 8 Leki, I. (1991). Twenty-five years of contrastive rhetoric: text analysis and writing pedagogies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25 (1).
- 9 Graddol, D. (1997). *The Future of English ?* Retrieved September 12, 2012, from http://www.britishcouncil.org/de/learning_-elt-future.pdf.
- 10 European Commission (2005). *Special Note Europeans and languages*.
Retried April 21, 2012, from
http://ec.europa.eu/public-opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_237.en.pdf.
- 11 Bae, J. (2011). *Teaching Process Writing for Intermediate/Advanced Learners in South Korea*. Retrieved April 6th, 2013, from
<http://minds.Wisconsin.edu/bitstream/handle/1973/52570/Bae.pdf?sequence=1>

12 Mydans, S. (2007). Across cultures, English is the word. New York Times. Retrieved April 10, 2012, from

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/09/world/asia/09ihtenglede.1.5198685.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

13 Brown, H. D. (2001). Teaching by Principles: an interactive approach to language pedagogy (2nd Ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

14 Stanley, G. (1993). Process Writing Barcelona: British Council.

15 Wikipedia (2013). Importance of English in Pakistan. Retrieved January 4, 2013, from

http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Importance_of_English_Language-in-Pakistan#ixzz25XjxVRdl

16 Steele, V. (1992). Product and Process Writing: a comparison. Rowley: Newbury s House.