

TACKLING THE WRITING PROCESS STEP-BY-STEP: WAYS OF GATHERING AND ORGANIZING IDEAS FOR WRITING

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Abstract:

Taking into consideration the complexity of writing, it is crucially important to develop an appropriate approach of teaching writing, and process-oriented instruction is seen as the most appropriate one. In this approach, writing is viewed as a step-by-step process involving of a series of stages occurring subsequently building on one another: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.

Key words: product approach, reader-based, revision, redrafting skills.

Introduction

To understand the process approach to writing, lets look at how some scholars define it:

This approach focuses on what goes on when learners write, and what the teacher can do to help the learners acquire the natural writing process.(Imelda, Cahyono, B. Y., & Astuti, U. P)

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. (Graham Stanley)

The process writing allows for the fact that no text can be perfect, but that a writer will get closer to perfection by producing, reflecting on, discussing and reworking successive drafts of a text. (David Nunan)

To sum up the definitions above, it can be inferred that process approach to writing is quite different from product approach (importance of the end product). while the former is writer-based urging one to search for paths for better writing, the

latter is a reader-based where the writer simply transforms preliminarily prepared models, copies or imitates some ready-made structures. The main idea of process writing is that “no text can be perfect” and the more we revise, reflect and rewrite it the better it looks and the more advanced our writing skills become.

Main body

To have a better understanding of process writing in practical teaching the following model can be useful:

Version #1

Topic: News report writing

Aims: To develop skills of recognizing important information and putting it into text

Improving writing by developing revision, redrafting skills

Introduction: Students will experience the process of forming ideas, collecting relevant information and organizing it to create a coherent structure. This information is then used to create a news article. Then they will try to improve their writing by redrafting the work.

Pre-writing stage: At this stage students undertake different activities to collect the information for further writing. Ex. Students working in groups, come up with an appealing title of the article and the information for the content. They then decide on the order of the information for the article.

Drafting stage: Now that students are sure about the information and its order, they write up the text.

Revision : Next students check their works using editor’s checklist. The teacher collects the works and does some error correction. The works can be returned to students for further revision and mistake correction.

Version #2

Brainstorming and representing information visually: Students use their background knowledge to come up with as many ideas as possible. Next, students

organize the ideas to prepare them for writing. It is a good idea to use graphic organizers here. (Previous lesson lists some major types of graphic organizers)

To make the process more interesting a teacher can bring papers “in the shape” of ideas to come up with. For example, if they are writing an essay and the topic is “global warming”, the papers can be in the shape of personal pronoun “I” where students list their position to the topic, “five fingers”, where each finger is used to state reasons for the phenomena, “body”, where they state general public opinions and etc.

Rough draft: Students focus on putting ideas into sentences and paragraphs. Grammar and spelling is not important at this stage.

Revision: At this stage students revise their work by removing or adding ideas, changing sequences and etc. To make the process fun and more focused the website “rockinresources” suggests the following steps: Students follow D.A.R.E. to revise template:

- ✓ Delete (first, they remove unnecessary sentences, words)
- ✓ Add (they add missing info, words, transitions)
- ✓ Rearrange (they change the order of some sentences)
- ✓ Exchange (change weak, common words for stronger, more advanced ones)
- ✓ Editing Students edit grammar, vocabulary and punctuation error.

To make the process fun and more focused the website “rockinresources” suggests the following steps: Students follow C.U.P.S. to edit:

- ✓ Capitalization
- ✓ Usage
- ✓ Punctuation
- ✓ Spelling

Peer reflection: At this stage students can get feedback from a peer. To make the stage more welcoming students can be instructed to tell two things they like about the paper and one wish to make it better.

Final draft: Students write final copies of their work.

The changing roles of teacher and students: Basically, two distinct modes of teacher’s intervention into the process of teaching writing are suggested: open process, or minimal control model, and close process of teaching, or maximal control approach. First, some comparison is provided below, before some conclusions can be drawn.

Stage	Minimal control/open process	Maximal control/ close process
Pre- writing	Teacher introduces the topic and allow students brainstorm and gather information related to the topic. A teacher can provide questions to help students generate ideas.	<p>Teacher introduces the topic and tries to stimulate students’ creativity by giving them advice on how to come up with more interesting ideas and improve the initial ones. While brainstorming, though a teacher tries to remain in the background, she/he can provide language support when needed.</p> <p>A teacher organizes some exercises focusing on problematic areas of students’ writing. For example, if it’s the form, a teacher might provide model texts or templates; if cohesion is weak, a teacher may provide a text and ask students to circle pronouns and reflect on their functions in the text.</p>

First draft	Now that students are sure about the information and its order, they write up the text.	Students quickly write the text, without worrying about grammar and spelling. If they do not know some words, they provide the word in their own language. With lower-level students, sentences can be composed on the board with a teacher guiding students through the process and others parallelly writing in their copybooks. With higher level students the teacher moves around the class and comments on structure, lexical items, the order and etc.
Revision	At this stage students themselves check their writing in addition to getting feedback from a peer.	At this stage students themselves check their writing in addition to getting feedback from a peer or the teacher.
Final draft	Students write final copies of their work.	Students write final copies of their work.

Although process- writing approach is in itself helpful to develop writing skills, minimal control mode works best with higher level independent students, while high-level control approach is more effective in improving writing skills.

Conclusion

When it comes to teaching writing, it is not only about grammar and vocabulary, but a number of other factors influence the reader’s perception of the written material, and thus, should not be overlooked by the teacher:

- The first obvious aspect is the handwriting, since badly-formed letters may influence the reader against the writer. However, asking students to

change their handwriting does not usually work. Though, it is still necessary to insist on neat and legible writing.

•The next issue is spelling, as frequent misspelling might act as the sign of the lack of education and careless attitude. Spelling is especially difficult for English language learners as the sounds of the word do not correspond with way it is spelt. Moreover, differences in spelling of American and British spelling create certain difficulties. The best way to help students overcome such issues is through reading and copying from written models.

Capitalization of names, months, the pronoun “I” are specific to English, and should be well-explained to students. Violation of such rules also makes a piece of writing inaccurate.

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