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ELABORATED METHODS IN THE LIGHT OF WRITING

Summary. *The article discusses the elaborated methods of writing by means of “product-oriented” and “process-oriented” approaches at the university level.*

Key words: *“product-oriented”, “process-oriented”, self-editing, self-discovery, process and product, complicated skills.*

Teaching writing has been and still is one of the complicated skills for language instructors to develop in students who learn English as a foreign language. In Uzbekistan, as in many other Asian countries, the focus in teaching writing in EFL classes at any level tends to be mostly on grammatical correctness that is “product-oriented”. As Pennington puts it, “The practice of language teaching in most Asian countries...usually employs a traditional product-oriented, examination-centered approach, with a strong emphasis on grammar.” [6. pp. 227–228]. As writing essays in their own language is different, students have difficulty in organizing and writing their essays. Students at university level also have problems in writing classes as their writing skills are not formed and developed during school years. These kinds of problems will put the task for EFL teachers not only to teach writing skills but also to carry on different approaches to teaching writing, including the process approach. In our article, we want to discuss “process-oriented” techniques and a content-based instruction methodology used in EFL writing classes at Bukhara State University. Data collected from questionnaires, student reflective writing, and teachers’ lesson suggest that some of the techniques used in these classes helped students to produce longer and better-developed compositions as well as increase their confidence and motivation to write. Specific techniques are found helpful including the teaching of prewriting activities, writing in multiple drafts, teaching students how to peer- and self-edit effectively, instructor comments on early drafts that focus more on content and organization than grammar, group activities that encourage interaction and sharing of ideas among students.

In “process-oriented” writing, the focus lies in the various steps that a writer goes through when producing text. Several literary sources about writing methodology (Cushing Weigle, Graham, Harmer, Hedge) bring up the Hayes-Flower model from 1981 “A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing” as a model that the theory of process writing has sprung from. The model was further developed

and updated by Hayes in 1996. It is rather complex containing many components, therefore it is only the model’s central ideas that are brought forward in this text.

The product-oriented approach to the teaching of writing emphasizes mechanical aspects of writing, such as focusing on grammatical and syntactical structures and imitating models. This approach is primarily concerned with “correctness” and form of the final product. Moreover, this approach fails to recognize that people write for an audience and for a purpose and that, ideas are created and formulated during the process of writing. However, the process-oriented approach emphasizes that writing itself is a developmental process that creates self-discovery and meaning. While the mechanical aspects of writing are important, they should not interfere with the composing process. This composing process requires much revision and rewriting. The teacher intervenes and guides students during the composing process but initially does not emphasize “correctness” and the final product; the emphasizes on “correctness” and the final product comes only toward the very end of the writing process (and, often, a major concern with “correctness” is put off until towards the middle or even end of the writing course). Instead of worrying about form, students concentrate on conveying a written message. Hence, the product of writing will improve with the discovery involved in composing. Product-oriented approaches to writing largely concern the forms of the written products that students compose. The writing exercises applied in this approach typically deal with sentence-level writing and paragraph-level organization. Students are often given a framework, which illustrates a pattern of rhetorical organization; then, they are asked to fit their ideas into this framework. Both the content and the form, which the students deal with, are largely controlled by the teacher. Since the focus of these approaches is on written form, grammar is emphasized and a particular effort is made to avoid errors.

Process-oriented approaches concern the process of how ideas are developed and formulated in writing. Writing is considered a process through which meaning is

created. This approach characterizes writing as following a number of processes: First, a writer starts writing ideas as drafts. Subsequently, he checks to see whether the writing and the organization makes sense to him or not. After that, he checks whether the writing will be clear to the reader. This approach focuses on how clearly and efficiently a student can express and organize his ideas, not on correctness of form. Students are first asked to go through such writing processes, trying to organize and express their ideas clearly. The assumption is that what the student as a writer is going to say will become clearer through these processes. Students are also taught writing devices used in marking the organization and in making the general coherence clearer.

While conducting writing classes at our department, we tried to use both process and product oriented approaches, but former is put in more important place. As Brown suggests process writing in the EFL classroom; in his chapter "Research on Second Language Writing", he mentions process writing as an efficient method in language teaching [2. pp. 335–337].

In "process-oriented" approach of writing, the following techniques are mainly used:

- Use of multiple drafts (usually three), with prewriting, revising, editing, rewriting, and proofreading presented as separate but often recursive steps in the writing process.
- Individualized feedback (mostly written comments, or teacher-student meetings).
- Comments on early drafts that focused more on content and organization than on the mechanical aspects of writing.
- Use of peer- and self-editing techniques.

Here below is given different schemes for process writing:

Graham (2003: www.teachingenglish.org.uk)

Prewriting

- Brainstorming.
- Planning.
- Generating ideas.
- Questioning.
- Discussion and debate.

Focusing ideas

- Fast writing.
- Group compositions.

Evaluating, Structuring and Editing

- Ordering.
- Peer Editing and proof-reading.
- Self-editing.

Hedge (2005:51)

- Being motivated to write.
- Getting ideas together.
- Planning and Outlining.
- Making notes.
- Making a first draft.
- Revising, Replanning, Redrafting.

- Editing.

Another approach of teaching writing effectively is "content-based" approach. It has been previously used in a variety of language learning context for the last few decades. Content-based instruction implies an integration of language learning and content learning while the language is learned within the context of a specific academic subject. In a content-based approach, language class activities are specific to the subject matter being taught and they stimulate students to learn through the use of the target language. According to Stryker and Leaver, content-based approaches enhance students' motivation and accelerate their acquisition of language proficiency. [8. pp. 44–45] The four major principles underlying content-based instruction are: automaticity, meaningful learning, intrinsic motivation and communicative competence. Brown also suggests "content-based classrooms may yield an increase in intrinsic motivation and empowerment, since the students are focused on subject matter that is important to their lives" [2. pp.49–50]. By generating content instruction and materials, content-based instruction keeps students interested and motivated. Content-based classroom is learner centered where students actively engage in the learning process. Content-based instruction introduces students to the discourses of their future professions and motivates them to work with authentic language resources. The teaching of writing to non-native speakers of English has matured since 1966. Raimes discussed this development under four approaches: A form-dominated approach, a process approach, a content-based approach and an English for specific purposes approach. [7. Pp.407–440] In content-based writing instruction, writing is connected to an academic subject matter and it is considered as a means of teaching the content [1. Pp. 66–67]

Here we give one of the lesson plans on writing e-mails.

Lesson Plan

Writing formal e-mail messages.

Students: Freshman students learning English as a foreign language.

Course: English.

Level: A 2.

Topic: Summer Vacation

Duration: 80 minutes.

Approach: Content-based Instruction.

Materials: Teacher-created slides: a visual resource for clarifying content and developing writing skills.

Lesson Objectives:

- learning about holiday resorts;
- picking up necessary language from the slides;
- writing to a tour agent an e-mail asking detailed information about a holiday resort.

Pre-writing stage:

Classroom Discussion: The students talk about their favorite holiday resorts.

Introducing relevant vocabulary and idioms before writing.

Note Taking: Students take notes during the slide show (teacher-produced slides).

While writing stage:

The students are asked to write an e-mail to a tour agent asking for advice about a nice summer holiday resort for his/her summer vacation. They will write a detailed e-mail asking for further information about the place they want to go by introducing the name of the holiday resort they have chosen. They will write in groups of 3 students (Group work). For the task, the students use their notes taken from the slide show.

Post- writing stage:

The students were placed in pairs and assigned to play the roles of a tourist and a tourist guide.

Student A: A tourist wants to learn about it as much as possible, asks whatever he wants to learn from the tourist guide.

Student B: A tourist guide answers the guest's questions as much as he can.

Peer editing and giving feedback.

Rewarding the best writer.

Homework:

The students write a package tour program to a holiday resort they have chosen individually.

Instruction: You are a tour operator and required to write a package tour program to a holiday resort in detail (250–300 words). Write about tour dates, the cost of the tour, transportation and accommodation, the planned daily activities on the island, etc.

The procedure of the lesson. First, the teacher held a warm up session, motivating the students and focusing their attention to the topic. Later, she conducted the pre-writing stage consisting of a class discussion activity, during which the students discussed their favorite holiday resorts. After the class discussion, the informative slides about the holiday resorts were presented and the students took notes from the slides in order to use them in their writing. Finally, they were asked to do the writing task (writing an e-mail). The students were given ample time to write the task. They did the task in groups of three students. Having completed the task, they read it

aloud and received feedback from the teacher and from the whole class. After the task was over, a role-play activity was conducted by pairs of students as a post-writing activity playing the role of a tourist and a tourist guide. With the post-writing activity, writing was integrated with speaking and the subject matter was reinforced. The students were assigned homework at the end of the class.

If we analyze the class we should point out firstly the students' motivation during the class. They were highly motivated during the lesson. They spent considerable energy on taking notes, participating in pairs and group works, and writing dialogues, giving additional signs of motivation. The students enjoyed the lesson and participated successfully by taking notes, writing the task and interacting with one another. They did not show any signs of boredom during the lesson. On the contrary, they were very much interested in the topic and undertook the task successfully. They seemed to enjoy the group-work and pair-work activities. They also showed positive attitudes in working with classmates. Their written products also confirmed that they were motivated and performed well during the lesson. When the written products were evaluated, they were found to be complete in form and meaning. Composed of syntactically and semantically appropriate sentences, the written products included the necessary vocabulary items to describe the intended facts and opinions. Furthermore, the written products were found to be cohesive, coherent and relevant with all ideas supporting one central theme using suitable linking devices. The written texts were also successful in terms of function; the e-mails written to a tour-guide asking additional information about a package tour to a holiday resort were extremely effective as the students wrote all the questions they were interested in.

In conclusion, teaching writing must involve both process and product. Teachers should first focus on the organization of the writing. As the next step, they should deal with grammatical problems seen in writing. When students are not good at organizing their ideas, the teacher should deal with this before moving on to grammatical mistakes (presumably, later in the term). This is for several reasons, among them that better organization often leads to the reduction of other errors and, of course, the clear expression of ideas is the major point of writing.

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