APPROACHES TO TEACHING WRITING IN EFL CONTEXT

مناهج لتدريس الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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Abstract

The writing skill has been considered as the most difficult and complex skill to be taught and acquired as well. The common concept between linguists and pedagogical specialists is that it is easier for second/foreign language learners to speak, listen and read L2 than write, since writing requires much more effort from language learners to be learned. Writing teaching methods have been developed in accordance with the development that affected English teaching methods and approaches. In the current article, two types of teaching methods are presented chronologically. The first type is the product approach followed by the process approach. The aim is to show and identify the theoretical and practical linguistic shifting from product/guided writing to process writing in teaching writing for second/foreign language learners. Product writing is a method of teaching writing, which emphasizes the students' finished written product. It is termed a product-oriented approach which focuses on what to write and the rules of writing; the teacher is the only one who evaluates the final product; whereas the process writing approach puts emphasis on the composing process. It pays more attention to how the piece of writing is created through stages such as planning, drafting and revising. In the process approach, the teacher's role has changed from an evaluator of the written product to a facilitator and participant in the writing process.

Keywords: Approaches; Teaching; Writing; EFL; Context

ملخص باللغة العربية:

تعتبر مهارة الكتابة من أصعب المهارات اكتسابا و تدريسا. المفهوم الشائع بين اللغويين والمتخصصين التربويين هو أنه من الأسهل لمتعلمي اللغة الثانية / الأجنبية التحدث والاستماع وقراءة اللغة الثانية من كتابتها ، لأن الكتابة تتطلب مجهودا أكبر بكثير من متعلمي اللغة ليتم اكتسابها. تم تطوير طرق تدريس الكتابة بما يتماشى مع التطور الذي حدث في طرق وأساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية. في المقالة الحالية ، يتم تقديم نوعين من طرق التدريس بالترتيب الزمني. النوع الأول هو نهج المنتج ثم يليه النهج العملياتي. الهدف هو إظهار وتحديد التحول اللغوي النظري والعملي من كتابة المنتج / الموجهة إلى التركيز على عملية الكتابة في ذاتها في تعليم الكتابة لمتعلمي اللغة الثانية / الأجنبية. منهج المنتج هي طريقة لتعليم الكتابة والتي تركز على المنتج المكتوب و النهائي. يطلق عليه نهج موجه نحو المنتج و يركز على ما يجب كتابته   و على قواعد الكتابة ؛ و فيه يكون المعلم هو الوحيد الذي يقيم المنتج النهائي ؛ بينما يركز النهج العملياتي للكتابة على عملية التأليف لأنه يولي مزيدا من الاهتمام لكيفية إنشاء القطعة المكتوبة عبر مراحل مثل التخطيط والصياغة والمراجعة. في هذا النهج تغير دور المعلم من مقيّم للمنتج المكتوب إلى ميسر ومشارك في عملية الكتابة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مناهج؛تدريس؛ الكتابة؛ اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ السياق

Introduction

English as a second language (ESL) composition professionals need an understanding of what is involved in second language (L_2) writing in order to be effective teachers of writing. They need coherent perspective, models, tools for thinking about second language writing in general and ESL composition in particular. There is no doubt that developments in ESL composition have been, to a certain extent, influenced by parallel developments in the teaching of writing to the native speakers of English. However, the unique context of ESL composition has necessitated somewhat distinct perspectives, models, and practices.

The history of ESL composition since about 1945- the beginning of the modern era of second language teaching in the United States-can be viewed as a succession of approaches or orientations to L2 writing, a cycle in which particular approaches achieve dominance and then fade, but never really disappear (Silva 1990:11).

Over the past decades, a number of different approaches for teaching writing have been formed in an effort to provide the best way for learning such an important skill. Each approach saw this skill from a different angle or a different perspective. In teaching

writing, we can focus on the product of that writing or on the writing process itself.

When concentrating on the product we are only interested in the aim of the task and in the product. Those who advocate a process approach to writing, however, pay attention to the various stages that any piece of writing goes through. Other approaches focus on other elements such as purpose and audience.

The product approach emphasizes error-free coherent text, whereas controlled composition focuses on the lexical and syntactic features of a text. ESL current- traditional rhetoric focuses on discourse- level text structure, while the process approach attends to the writer's composing behaviours. The English for academic purposes approach focuses on the reader, in the form of the academic discourse community. (Silva 1990:11)

Writing is by nature an interactive process- as suggested by the interactive approach- because it involves out of the symbolic interplay between writer, text and reader. Consequently, by making conditions more authentic than the ones in traditional classroom tasks, an awareness of audience, purpose and intentionality is reinforced.

Writing involves more than just producing sentences. To be able to write a piece of prose, the student writer must be able to write a connected series of sentences which are grammatically and logically linked. It is also necessary to be able to write appropriately for the kind of the purpose and audience the student has in mind, and it is in institutional writing that the guide- lines for appropriateness are most easily discovered, demonstrated and applied. (Silva 1990:11)

The student writer must also write in order to communicate something to his intended audience, and since this audience is not physically present, what he writes must be clear, precise and unambiguous as possible. In short, the student writer must produce a piece of discourse which embodies correctness of form, appropriateness of style and unity of theme and clarity.

1. The Product Approach

The product approach dominated the teaching of writing in ELT until the 1980's-it involves using "a model- text" which the students copy. Normally each model text contains lot of examples

of a specific type of language the teacher wants the students to focus on such as the simple past. The students read the model text, and do exercises that focus on the language in the model text. Finally, the students might be asked to transform a text, which is in the present simple into the past simple. The model text will help them to do this. (Hedge 2000:308)

The focus is obviously on grammatical accuracy. The primary goal of product writing is an error- free coherent text. This reflects the preoccupation of ELT methodology at the time- the Audio Lingual Method was in fashion.

Model texts give students confidence and security; something they can use as the basis for their own writing (especially for beginners or lower level learners). The result is highly specific and focused writing practice. It is a good way of getting the students to focus on a specific piece of grammar in their own writing.

However, the product approach is criticized for the lack of creativity and personalisation (the students have little to say in what they write and how to write it). Besides repetitiveness, being unrealistic (students are obviously not writing for a purpose, but writing to practice a grammar point), for being boring and demotivating. It is also too prescriptive (the model-based approach can be seen as transmitting the message to the student that there is only one way to write correctly. (Hedge 2000:308)

In reality, of course, there are many different ways of writing well). The product approach has given students the impression that the composing process is linear. One of the main criticisms of the approach, however, is that it does not give students practice writing because it does not reflect what real writers do in real situations.

This is not to say, however, that the product approach no longer exists, nor that it has no practical applications.

2. The Process Approach

The introduction of the process approach to ESL composition seems to have been motivated by dissatisfaction with controlled composition and the current- traditional approach. Many felt that

neither approach adequately fostered thought or its expression- that controlled composition was largely irrelevant to this goal and the linearity and prescriptivism of current- traditional rhetoric discouraged creative thinking and writing.

Those who, like Taylor (1981: 5-6), felt that "writing is not the straight- forward plan- outline- write process that many believe it to be" looked to first- language composing process research for new ideas, as- summing with Zamel (1982) that "ESL writers who are ready to compose and express their ideas use strategies similar to those of native speakers of English" (203). The assumptions and principles of this approach were soon enunciated. The composing process was seen as a non- linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning (Zamel 1983: 165).

Guidance through and intervention in the process were seen as preferable to control- that is, the early and perhaps premature imposition of organizational patterns or syntactic or lexical constraints. Content, ideas, and the need to communicate would determine form (Silva 1990: 15). In essence, composing means expressing ideas, conveying meaning. "composing means thinking" (Raimes 1983 : 261).

In one cluster of L1 theories, the writer is viewed as originator of written text, the *process* through which the writer goes to create and produce discourse is the most important component in the theory. Fraigly (1986) identifies two groups within the process camp, the *expressivists* and the *cognitivists*. Expressivism, which developed in the first decades of the twentieth century, reached its zenith in the late 1960's and early 1970's, when the individual expression of honest and personal thought became a popular trend in teaching writing (John 1990:25). Writing was considered an art, a creative act in which the process –the discovery of the true self-is as important as the product- the self discovered and expressed (Berlin 1988:484).

Leaders of the expressivist movement: Donald Murray (1983), ken Macrorie (1971), William Coles (1981), Peter Elbow (1973, 1981), and others- have published widely, advocating classroom techniques that encourage students to take power over their own prose. Elbow, perhaps the most famous of the group *writing without teachers* 1973, *embracing contraries* 1981, *writing with power* : *techniques of mastering the writing*

process 1981, speaks of writing as a kind of magic that can be performed by anyone who is involved in and believes in his or her tale. (1981: 369).

Teachers advocating the expressivist view are nondirective; they facilitate classroom activities designed to promote writing fluency and power over the writing act. Their textbooks contain assignments designed to encourage self-discovery, such as journal writing and personal essays, through which students can "first write freely and uncritically so that [they] can get down as many words as possible." (Elbow1981b:7).

It is the cognitivists or "writing as problem- solving" group that has had more effect upon ESL research and teaching, however, there are two key words in cognitivist discussions: *thinking* and *process*. The first, which identifies high- order thinking skills with problem solving, is the theme of Flower's textbook *problem-solving strategies for writing* (1985, 1989).

This book requires students to plan extensively. Planning includes defining the rhetorical problem, placing it in a larger context, making it operational, exploring its parts, generating alternative solutions, and arriving at a well- supported conclusion. Once the problem has been identified and the paper has been planned, students continue the *writing process* by translating their plans and thoughts into words, and by reviewing their work through revising and editing. *Problem –solving strategies* by Hayes and Flower (1983) are based upon research that employed think- aloud protocols and other techniques: it revealed that complex writing processes are not linear or formulaic but rather individual and recursive.

The influence of the process approaches, especially of cognitive views upon modern ESL classrooms cannot be exaggerated.

In most classrooms, ESL teachers prepare students to write through invention and other prewriting activities, encourage several drafts, require paper revision, generally through group work, and delay the student fixation with correction of sentence-level errors until the final editing stage.

Therefore, the goal of a teacher, in this view, is to produce good writers who not only have a large repertoire of powerful strategies, but they have sufficient self- awareness of their own

process to draw on these alternative techniques as they need them. In other words, "they guide their own creative process" (Flower 1985:370).

This approach calls for providing a positive, encouraging, and collaborative workshop environment within which students, with ample time and minimal interference, can work through their composing processes.

The teacher's role is to help students develop viable strategies for getting started (finding topics, generating ideas and information, focusing and planning structure and procedures), for drafting (encouraging multiple drafts), for revising (adding, deleting, modifying, and rearranging ideas); and for editing (attending to vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics of punctuation and spelling).

From a process perspective, then, writing is a complex, recursive and creative process or set of behaviours that is very similar in its broad outlines for first and second language writers. Learning to write entails developing an efficient and effective composing process. The writer is the centre of attention- someone engaged in the discovery and expression of meaning; the reader, focusing on context, ideas, and the negotiating of meaning, is not preoccupied with form. The text is a product- a secondary, derivative concern, whose form is a function of its content and purpose.

Finally, there is no particular context for writing implicit in this approach; it is the responsibility of the individual writer to identify and appropriately, address the particular task, situation, discourse community, and sociocultural setting in which they are involved.

Although the process approach has been generally well and widely received in ESL composition, it is not without its critics. These critics have perceived theoretical and practical problems and omissions of the approach and have suggested that the focus of ESL composition be shifted from the writer to the reader- that is, the academic discourse community.

The process view of writing sees it as thinking, as discovery. Writing is the result of employing strategies to manage the composing process. It involves a number of activities: setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate

language, making a draft, reading and revising it, then revising and editing .It is a complex process which is neither easy nor spontaneous for many second language writers.

It was in the 1970's that interest developed in what second language writers actually do as they write, motivated largely by a belief that if we wish to influence and improve the outcomes of writing for our learners, then we need to understand how a piece of writing comes into being. In fact, a piece of writing is the outcome of a set of complicated cognitive operations. A major concern of researchers into second language writing has been to identify these mental operations, and a number of research methods have been used to do this: interviews, observation, audio and video recording, and making protocols as writers think aloud during composing. Two studies will serve as examples of this research and its outcomes.

Zamel (1983) made a study of the composing processes of six advanced ESL students, participants in her own optional college writing class. She observed them as they prepared formal papers requiring expository writing. In setting out her research questions, she places herself in a tradition of process- centred studies with similar aims (Eming 1971; Perl 1979; Faigley and Witte 1981).

> *How do writers write? How do their ideas seem to get generated? What happens to these ideas after they are recorded? To what extent do these writers attend to the development and clarification of these ideas? To what extent and at what point during the process do they deal with more mechanical matters*? (Zamel 1983: 169)

A number of findings emerged: Planning was not a single phase but a thinking activity to which writers returned again and again during composing.

These writers had individual strategies for "getting into" writing. Some wrote notes, lists, or diagrams, and all of the students spent a good deal of time thinking at the outset, but two of the best writers wrote nothing down until they started the essay.

The writing process was recursive and generative, with students re-reading their work, assessing it, reacting, and moving on. There was an interesting distinction between the poorer writers

who seemed to focus on re-reading only smaller chunks of discourse and better writers who sometimes re-read whole paragraphs.

Revising took place throughout the process and generally involved considerable changes: for example, composing something new, deleting sentences, and shifting paragraphs around and sometimes eliminating them.

All of the writers paid attention to surface-level features but the better writers dealt with these at the end of the process. It was the poorer writers who spent time throughout the process changing words and phrases.

Linguistic problems seemed to concern the writers least. The better writers used strategies such as leaving a blank or writing down a word in their first language in order not to be distracted as they developed ideas.

Once ideas had been written down and developed, the writers began to edit for surface- level features such as accuracy in grammar, word choice, spelling and punctuation.

These findings have been supported by many other studies- such as the one of Raimes (1985), who supported Zamel's (1983) observations on the role of language in the composing process. She suggested that with students who exhibit lack of competence in writing, poor composing competence could be a greater factor in this than poor language competence. She used think- aloud protocols to investigate the writing process and made the following comment on experienced writers:

> *"They consider purpose and audience. They consult their own background knowledge. They let ideas incubate. They plan as they write, they read back over what they have written. Contrary to what many textbooks advice, writers do not follow a neat sequence of planning, organising, writing and then revising. For while writer's product- the finished essay, a story or novel- is presented in lines, the process that produces is not linear at all."* (Raimes 1985: 229)

2.1. The Implications of the Process Approach

The issues that arise for teachers from insights into what makes a successful writer are whether we can teach strategies for planning, revising and editing, and whether we can help students develop a sense of audience.

Process approach tries to provide useful support for student writers. The nature of the support will depend on the kind of learners, for example, their age, background and needs for writing in English. It could be argued that adult learners should already have developed effective writing strategies in their first language.

However, it may well be the case that students have not received the necessary support in their first language and will benefit from a process approach in the English language classroom, whatever their age. The principle aim of the process approach; therefore, is to help students to gain greater control over the cognitive strategies involved in composing. This suggests a number of principles for the teacher to incorporate into the teaching of writing (Hedge 2000:308).

2.1.1. Helping Students to Generate Ideas

One of the hardest tasks in writing is getting started. Even the most fluent writers in their native language need time to generate ideas and to plan what they are going to write about. Students are no different. If we are going to ask them to write anything more substantial than instant writing, we have to give them the opportunities to think. This is especially true for more formal tasks such as narrative writing, offering opposing views on a topic, report writing, formal letters, the design of publicity material such as advertisements and posters. In academic writing, when tutors set assignments, a first step in pedagogy could be to encourage students to work in pairs and arrive at an understanding of the task by questioning and clarifying the meaning of key expressions and selecting the information needed to fulfil the task. Collaboration makes generating ideas more enjoyable and productive. (Hedge 2000:308)

In the general EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom, when tasks are set for practice purposes, the teacher has the responsibility of helping students get their ideas together. White and Arndt (1991) make a useful distinction between guided techniques

in which questions are used, and unguided techniques in which students generate ideas by themselves.

Both guided and unguided techniques demonstrate the help that teachers can give as students think out a topic, discover a purpose, and decide on a perspective in the early stages of writing. Notice that these activities show how writing can be stimulated by students working interactively. Such interaction has the value of providing student writers with an audience on whom to test out the selection of content. However, we need to keep in mind the solitary nature of most writing and move students gradually towards the independent position of a writer engaged in real writing tasks.

There are a lot of techniques used in helping students to generate ideas such as the Spidergram and the Spaghetti note making. The "brainstorming technique" is an example of such possible techniques. It generates ideas through individual reflection which are scribbled down and developed as the mind makes associations. (Hedge 2000:308)

2.1.2. Providing Practice in Planning

Given that we know successful writers plan their writing in very different ways, this needs great care. Many teachers now take the view that the best help they can give is to provide students with ideas for planning in the early stages and to let them take up those that they find individually useful and attractive. At the same time, it is essential to communicate the flexible nature of plans, which ideally should change and be adjusted as writing progresses and generates alternative ideas and structures.

There are lots of ways of helping students to organize their ideas: Through planning in groups, asking strategic questions by the teacher, organizing points in a hierarchy of importance for presentation, highlighting essential information, sequencing given information, and sorting and matching ideas. The advantage of mind maps such as "brainstorming" as a planning strategy for example, particularly for descriptions, is that all the aspects of a topic can be easily seen in relation to each other and possible links between sections of the composition suggest themselves. This can assist with advance planning of the overall text. All of these techniques give

initial support for what will eventually be a process undertaken individually (Hedge 2000:308).

2.1.3. Contextualizing Tasks to Develop a Sense of Audience

Helping student-writers to develop a sense of audience is another important task. With less mature writers, who may not have developed a sense of audience in writing in their first language, we can create audiences and build up awareness of the reader. For example, the school can provide an audience with its population of English language learners; for example, class magazines can be published for the wider school community. Within the classroom it is possible for the teacher to set up a pair work in which one student's writing forms the basis for a response from the other student in the pair, for instance, both students write a letter of invitation.

At this stage they can help each other plan and draft. If their discussion is in English, this constitutes natural fluency practice. The students then exchange the letters and write replies, accepting or declining the invitation. The principle involved in these letter exchanges is that of task dependency as the success of the exchange depends on the clarity of the letters to their readers: this reflects the interaction of reading and writing in real life.

As students work on writing tasks, it is important that they ask themselves who they are writing for and keep that audience in mind as they write (Hedge 2000:308-309).

2.1.4. Encouraging Students in Revision Strategies

Revision is not something that clearly exists in product writing, as the assumption is that the provided model has been followed. Process writing, in contrast, requires that a degree of analysis be undertaken. After the students have written their work, it needs to be revised and evaluated. Learners who are unused to process writing will view revision as a sign of failure if handled poorly by the teacher. As with revision, evaluation is often viewed negatively, mostly due to the traditional technique of merely highlighting the errors in a learner's work. The teacher's task is to provide evaluation that will lead the learners into reflecting on their work. (Simpson 2002).

Many teachers now hold the view that the traditional procedure of taking work in, marking it, and returning it to students when the

writing experience is no longer fresh in their minds, has serious disadvantages. This is especially the case if little work is done in class on revising as it gives students the impression that the teacher is primarily responsible for improving the quality of their written work.

A variety of procedures are now used to support revision, and these need to be evaluated against what we know of how good writers go about the process. (Hedge 2000:313).

A popular procedure is conferencing. As the class writes, the teacher can talk with individual students about work in progress. Through careful questioning, the teacher can support a student writer in getting ideas together, organizing them, and finding appropriate language. Keh (1990) (cited in Johns 1990) suggests an elicitation procedure with focusing questions such as « who are you writing to?" and « how have you organized your points?

Conferencing is a useful technique during the earlier stages of composition when writers are still thinking about content and organization. A popular device at a slightly later stage is the use of checklist. It is for individual use. The contained questions may focus on the overall content and organization, and its appropriateness to purpose and audience. Other types of checklist can be used when students exchange drafts of comment. For example, a checklist on paragraphing could contain the questions:

-does the composition divide naturally into several parts?

-do the paragraphs reflect those parts?

-does each paragraph have a topic sentence with a main idea?

-does each paragraph have an effective concluding sentence?

Reformulation is a useful procedure when students have produced a first draft and are moving on to look at more local possibilities for improvement. It has the particular advantage that it provides students with opportunities to notice any differences between the target model and their own production and thus to acquire language forms. Reformulation (Allwright 1984) proceeds through the following stages:

1- The students carry out a guided writing task. The task is guided to ensure that the content and organization of their writing is similar. Indeed, collaborative work could be used at the planning stage.

2-Each student writes a first draft and hands it to the reader.

3-The teacher marks the work by indicating problems by means of underlining or highlighting (see figure 1).

4- The teacher chooses one student's essay and reformulates it, following the ideas closely but improving the expression in terms of accuracy.

5- The original piece and the reformulation are copied so that students can compare them.

6- The class works in pairs and groups, identifying the changes in the reformulation and discussing the reasons for them.

7- The teacher, with the class, discusses the changes and gives a rationale, inviting comments and questions.

8- Students then go through their own first drafts and revise them in the light of any useful information they have gained.

Wf	wrong form:	the <u>best</u> will be its achievements
Ww	wrong word:	patient, funny and <u>kindly</u>
T	wrong tense:	in the last few weeks you <u>doesn't</u> <u>have</u> much fun.
Λ	something is missing:	you arrive in Brighton Λ the 1st February.
Sp	wrong spelling:	<u>confortable</u> Sp
WO	wrong word order:	you haven't seen [yet] London
P	wrong punctuation:	look out (p).
V	wrong verb form:	the titanic <u>sunk</u> very quickly.
//	new paragraph needed:	
∅	not necessary:	John came in and he sat down.
U	you don't need a new sentence. Join up the idea	
?	I don't understand what you are trying to say.	
____	This isn't quite right: it needs clearer expression (usually the teacher provides an alternative.	
[ ]	this part needs to be re-arranged or reworded	

!! You really should know what's wrong here because

-we've just done it in class.

-I've told you so many times.

Figure 1: An example of a coding system for correcting a written work
(Hedge 2000: 316)

The advantage of reformulation is that it allows discussion of such aspects as how ideas are developed, how a range of structures, vocabulary, or connecting devices can be used, and how the style needs to be appropriate to the readers.

The revision strategies described before have the same aim of encouraging students to see writing as something that can be improved, and they train learners in looking for areas for improvement.

It is good for every teacher to ensure that a variety of techniques are used to encourage this essential activity in the writing process.

3. Feedback according to both Approaches: Product versus Process Approach

While reading student papers, teachers often ask themselves, "How can I give the best feedback to help my students improve their compositions?"

The question is difficult because there is little agreement among teachers or researchers about how teachers should respond to student writing. Much of the conflict over teacher response to written work has been whether teacher feedback should focus on form (e.g., grammar, mechanics) or on content (e.g., organization, amount of detail). Griffin (1982: 299) has noted, «the major question confronting any theory of responding to student writing is where we should focus our attention"

Should classroom teachers' written feedback focus on form or content?

Does the research in composition support the current trends in composition teaching to focus on content?

Changes in both the focus of composition teaching and the focus of feedback have occurred over time. Early in the nineteenth

century, rhetoric was taught, and little or no attention was paid to grammatical correctness (Connor, 1985). Toward the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, interest in grammatical correctness grew. Textbooks focused on exercises that required students to find and correct errors. In recent years, there has been emphasis placed on the writing process. Many process writing textbooks have been published which focus on content through several drafts of a paper and leave examination of form to the final draft. However, many teachers maintain a strong interest in correctness in spite of this recent focus on process (Applebee, 1981).

Theories about teaching English as a second language have affected perspectives regarding feedback on writing over the past several decades. Raimes (1991) summarized the shift in the teaching of writing according to second language acquisition theory. Until the 1970's, language teachers put great emphasis on accuracy and attached greater importance to form rather than meaning. During this period, when behaviourism and structuralism predominated in the language learning field, writing was regarded as a tool to practice grammatical structures. Accurate forms of language were given the highest priority in writing classes. In this framework, writing was mainly taught through controlled writing exercises and students had few opportunities to express their opinions in written English. With regard to errors, most writing teachers spent a lot of time treating students' errors and they usually provided the correct forms directly.

Since the 1970's, the major teaching theory has been Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which has emphasized the communicative function of a language. In this framework, writing teachers have attempted to help their students gain fluency in writing. Free writing was a popular technique used frequently in the classroom.

Since then, some first language (L1) teachers and scholars have taken an interest in the writing process, rather than the product itself (Faigley &Witte, 1981; Sommers, 1980). Being influenced by L1 research, many L2 researchers have applied the process approach to L2 writing (Keh, 1990; Raimes, 1984; Semke, 1984; Zamel, 1980, 1985).

Zamel (1980) suggested that the purpose of composing should be to help students express their feelings, experiences and opinions.

This approach emphasizes the ongoing steps of student writing from prewriting to post-writing such as brainstorming, planning, drafting, rewriting, and editing (Keh, 1990). The act of writing is considered to be a matter of communication between reader and writer, and is not restricted to grammar practice.

The recent orientation towards a more learner-centered approach to second language learning and teaching leads to a more demanding role for teachers and learners. One of the most important changes resulting from this shift is that the teacher is no longer "the dispenser of knowledge" or "the distributor of sanction and judgments" (Sheils, 1986). At the same time, this shift calls for greater learner participation and responsibility in the learning process. From this perspective, the teacher appears to be less 'prescriptive' in dominating classroom practices and is less authoritarian, as learning is now seen to be an individual activity as well as a socially-shared experience.

A new emphasis on collaborative effort between teachers and learners also assumes a greater contribution from the learner in the learning process (Nunan, 1988). The learner is no longer a passive recipient but an active participant in the classroom process. In order to fulfill this active role, learners also need to develop an awareness of themselves as learners.

Moreover, the product oriented approach considers the writing process as a linear one which can be determined by the writer before starting to write (Hairston, 1982). In this orientation, writing is conceptualized as a sequential completion of separate tasks (Reid, 1982). The focus of the product approach in writing is on a composition made up of a series of parts - words, sentences, paragraphs - but not on the whole discourse with meaning and ideas (Sommers, 1982). Thus, the teaching of writing in the product approach is a matter of prescribing a set of predetermined tasks or exercises to the students. The students are in effect engaged in a task of putting words into grammatical sentences. To a large extent, this is not composing but a 'grammar exercise' in a controlled context.

This approach reflects the school tradition which emphasizes the "conscious memorization of grammar rules and the student's explicit knowledge of these rules" (Jones, 1985). Language proficiency becomes the primary element that determines the skill of composing,

while the importance of discovering ideas and creating meaning is overlooked.

With such a restricted view of composing, writing teachers are often distracted from responding to student writing, as their time is taken up primarily by identifying and correcting mechanical errors. This 'police-force concept of usage' (Mills, 1953) not only vividly reflects the traditional belief of error-free writing dating back to 1874 at Harvard University (Connors, 1985), but also reflects the legacy of educational approaches such as, in second language teaching, audiolingualism which asserts that teachers have to prevent the occurrence of errors at all cost (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

Hence, the teacher's role in writing becomes limited to that of spotter of grammatical errors and reinforcer of a set of grammar rules. However, feedback that is focused on errors does nothing to help students in generating and exploring ideas in writing. This kind of response also pays no attention to reader-based discourse.

Fortunately, the shift of focus from the product to the process of writing has caused many teachers to reconsider their practices in ESL writing pedagogy. From the new perspective, the L2 writer is seen as an active thinker in the writing process rather than a passive 'tabula rasa' to be supplied with or instructed in prespecified content or grammar rules.

Both teachers and learners are now collaboratively involved in discovering what written language is and how a piece of writing is produced. We no longer believe that writing is a uni-directional process of recording "presorted, predigested" ideas (Taylor, 1981). Instead, writing does not follow a neat order of planning, organizing and writing procedures. It is recursive, a "cyclical process during which writers move back and forth on a continuum, discovering, analyzing, and synthesizing ideas" (Hughey, Jane B. Wormuth, Deanna R. Hartfiel, V. Faye 1983). Editing for grammatical and mechanical accuracy should come in the final stage, The traditional product-oriented view of writing which regards writing as linear and fragmented procedure is thus contrary to the actual writing process (Flower and Hayes, 1981). Writers are able to make modifications of any sort on the written text or in their original plans as they review their writing. The process approach regards writing as a creative and purposeful activity of reflecting - both in the sense of mirroring and

in the sense of deliberate on (Pennington, 1991) one's own thoughts. The written product, opposite to the product approach, is not seen as an end itself.

Rather, it is the manifestation of a more effective writer in the making. The student is seen both as a learner and as a writer, and the purpose of writing is clear: a written communication with the writer himself/ herself, with his/her fellow learners, with his/her teacher, and with his/her intended readers (Stewart, 1988).

The rise of the process approach marks the beginning of a new era for L2 writing pedagogy. It renders a new perspective in giving response to student's written work and a new way of providing feedback.

Since the emphasis of writing is now on the whole discourse, the stress of language is on function rather than on form, on the use of a language rather than on its usage (Stewart, 1988), where usage is defined as a body of conventions governing the use of a language. Teachers no longer act primarily or only as the authority on writing, but rather as consultants and assistants to help students to take over the responsibility as writers. The traditional feedback which concentrates on the surface-level mechanics is inadequate in this new orientation. Instead, the teacher must attend to the various processes involved in the act of composing, in order to help students produce coherent, meaningful and creative discourse.

In the process approach, the teacher's role has shifted from an evaluator of the written product to a facilitator and co-participant in the writing process. The emergence of a process-oriented approach argues for a completely different feedback system.

Unlike the product-centered paradigm which regards composing as a product to be evaluated, the process-oriented approach considers writing as a complex developmental task. It pays more attention to how a discourse is created through the negotiation and discovery of meaning than to the production of error-free sentences. Language is a means to explore the writer's ideas. The focus in the process approach is on how to give "reader-based" feedback (Elbow, 1981), and the editing of grammatical accuracy is postponed to the final stage. By offering feedback on both content and form, the process approach is more embracing, in that it helps students from

the first stage of generating ideas to the final stage of refining the whole written discourse. The work of providing feedback to students will also become more demanding. The teacher has two roles to play. Teachers may, on the one hand, present themselves as helpful facilitators offering support and guidance; on the other hand, they may act as an authority imposing critical judgment on written products. The patterns of feedback and responses given by the writing teacher depend very much on the teacher's conception of the composing process and his/her understanding of learner's errors.

Product-oriented feedback is mainly form-focused, emphasizing grammatical correctness while neglecting other aspects such as the discovery and construction of meaning in the writing process. Obviously, there is a need to address concerns of accuracy and language in the feedback stage of writing. Thus, the product approach can usefully be incorporated into the system of the process approach.

Feedback in the process approach emphasizes a reader's (a teacher or peer's) response regarding the content and organization and leaves grammatical accuracy to the final editing phase. Therefore, advocates of the process approach have often argued that overt error correction may hinder the development of fluent writing (Semke, 1984; Zamel, 1985). Zamel (1985) examined whether error correction was effective in improving grammatical accuracy in compositions by comparing students who had been given correction on grammar with those who had been provided with feedback on content only. She reported that no significant difference was found in accuracy of composing between the two groups throughout the experimental period. However, students who were given only content feedback were superior to those who were given grammar feedback.

Semke (1984), who utilized a process approach, suggested that teachers should be concerned more about content since error correction did not help L2 German students improve their accuracy. She found that error correction did not make a difference in the accuracy of her L2 students' compositions. Semke formed four groups for the study: the first group was given comments on grammatical errors; the second group was provided with comments on content; the third group was provided with comments on both

grammar and content; and the fourth group had errors pointed out. She reported that there was no significant difference in accuracy of the students' compositions among the four groups after the 10-week experimental period.

Findings from the studies of Semke (1984) and Zamel (1985) gave L2 writing teachers considerable insights about the need to be more concerned with content than with surface forms by recognizing the communicative aspect of writing. However, the finding regarding the effect of feedback improvements in surface level grammar usage in composing must be interpreted cautiously.

Conclusion

Recently, writing stopped to be regarded as secondary. It proved to be as essential as the spoken form in acquiring a second language. It is also one of the basic elements that should be mastered in order to reach the communicative end of language. Like the other study skills writing is taught according to certain approaches. The leaders of each approach look at writing from different angles and suggest views and perspectives about how writing should be understood and urge researchers to adapt and adopt new teaching methods based on those views.

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