

Effective Teaching Approaches for Enhancing the Students' Writing Skill

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Abstract

The objective of doing this research paper is to investigate the actual situation of the students' needs, wants and lacks in writing skill and to develop their writing ability by means of effective teaching approaches. As writing is one of the most valuable learning tool to give an idea or message, students need to focus on and master in this skill. Although fourth year students have been learning English since their very beginning of learning, they still face problems in writing. Most of the students have no confidence and they are afraid of making mistakes in writing activities. In this research paper, a survey on selected students from fourth year is carried out and questionnaires are given to find out the current situation of the students' weakness and interest. Based on the findings of needs analysis, effective teaching approaches for improvement of students' writing skill are presented in this research. It is hoped that this research paper will give lots of support for development of students' writing skill through effective approaches which are interesting and useful for the students' writing skill and help learners to become competent writers.

Keywords: effective, approaches, process, product, writing skill.

1. Introduction

This research paper aims to develop the writing skill of the fourth-year students who are attending at Technological University, (Mandalay). All of the students have exposed to English since the early age but they are weak in writing skill. In the class, they find it difficult to construct correct sentences and create own writing.

Although they are adult learners, writing is a challenge for them when they do the actual writing. The most examined skill of English language skill is the writing skill whereas very few students can write well. So, they need to learn and practice varied classroom activities in their own to become better writers. To enhance their writing skill, teachers have the responsibility to remove their students' negative attitudes to writing and to encourage their interests in writing.

2. Literature review

As English is a medium of communication, writing, especially, need to be acquired for most of the students. Writing is one of the productive skills which is tested in the formal exam. So, the students should build their confidence and proficiency through writing activities. Effective approaches for writing increase efficiency by helping students organize, plan, or brainstorm about their writing before beginning a first draft. These approaches help the students organize their thoughts and process the order of those thoughts. And these approaches support the students build their confidence and proficiency through systematic writing activities so they can tackle various types of task in writing.

2.1. Approaches to Teaching Writing

There are several ways to approach writing skills both in and outside the classroom. Teachers need to choose between them, decided whether they want their students to focus more on the process of writing than its product. Moreover, teachers can use these approaches of writing to practice writing assignment and essay writing accurately. And the students will have the ability to spell correctly, choose the right vocabulary, use grammar correctly and build the sentences correctly.

2.1.1. Process Approach

In the teaching writing, teacher can focus on the product of that writing or on the writing process itself. Process approach to writing tends to focus more on the varied classroom activities which promote the development language use: brainstorming, group discussion, re-writing. Those who advocate a process approach to writing, however, pay attention to the various stages that any piece of writing goes through. By spending time with their students on pre-writing phases, editing, redrafting, and finally publishing their work, a process approach aims to get the heart of the various skills that should be employed when writing.

In its simplest form a process approach asks students to consider the procedure of putting together a good piece of work. Teacher might, for example, discuss the concept of first and final drafts with their students and then ask them to say whether the following activities take place at first or final stages in the following box, and to put them in the best order:

- Check language use (grammar, vocabulary, linkers).
- Check punctuation (and layout).

- Check spelling.
- Check writing for unnecessary repetition of words or information.
- Decide on the information for each paragraph, and the order the paragraphs should go in.
- Note down various ideas.
- Select the best ideas for inclusion.
- Write a clean copy of the corrected version.
- Write out a rough version.

In reality, the writing process is more complex than this of course, and the various stages of drafting, reviewing, redrafting and writing, etc. are done in a recursive way: they loop backwards and move forwards between these various stages.

Process writing is an interrelated set of recursive stages which include:

- drafting
- structuring (ordering information, experimenting with arrangements, etc),
- reviewing (checking context, connections, assessing impact, editing),
- focusing (that is making sure the students are getting the message across they want to get across),
- generating ideas and evaluation (assessing the draft or subsequent drafts).

Table 1 Process writing model

Stages	Process Writing Activity		
Generating Ideas	Pair work Discussion	Prewriting techniques: brainstorming/clustering	Prompts on argumentative genre
Focusing	Pair work Discussion	Developing thesis statement	Sample of a thesis statement from website address
Structuring	Pair work Discussion	Paragraphing: Topic sentence Supporting sentences Concluding sentence	Sample of a paragraph writing from website address
Drafting	Individual Work	Writing the draft/drafts	Sample of essays from website address
Evaluating	Individual Work	Peer feedback	Evaluation checklist
Re-viewing	Individual Work	Peer feedback	Final views/comments

One of the disadvantages of getting students to concentrate on the process of writing is that it takes time: time to brainstorm ideas or collect them in some other ways; time to draft a piece of writing and then, with the teacher's help perhaps, review it and edit it in various ways before, perhaps, changing the focus, generating more ideas, redrafting, re-editing and on. This cannot be done on fifteen minutes. However, the various stages may well involve discussion, research, language study, and a considerable amount of interaction between teacher

and students and between the students themselves so that when process writing is handled appropriately it stretches across the whole curriculum.

There are times when process writing is simply not appropriate, either because classroom time is limited, or because the teachers want students to write quickly as part of a communication game, or when working alone, they want the students to compose a letter of brief story on the spot.

2.1.2 Suggested Activity: Identifying Stages in a Process

Aim : To develop the language needed for writing as a process.

Time : 20 minutes

Aid : Distributing handouts

Organisation: Pairs, groups

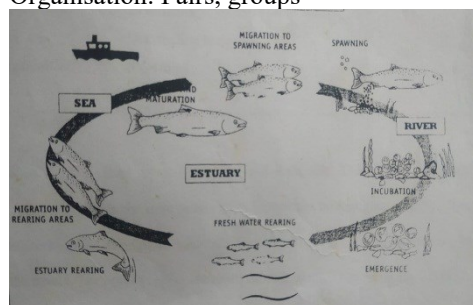


Figure 1 : Life cycle of salmon
Source: Humphreys (2006)

2.2. Product Approach

This is a traditional approach in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, which is usually presented and analysed at an early stage. When concentrating on the product, they are only interested in the aim of a task and in the end product. Product writing is an approach to teaching writing that focus on student's final production, that is the text they are asked to produce.

When concentrating on the product, difficulties in writing minimized since students start writing from a very controlled basis. Students are not required to generate and brainstorm ideas as thoroughly as they do in process writing. They spend more time analysing and practising the main features of the text they are supposed to write. Product writing involves exposing students to a model text of the genre they are supposed to produce. After reading the model text, the students analyse the main features of the specific type of text and then teachers tend to privilege product writing when the genre being worked with has fixed conventions _ it is easier to draw students' attention to them, and producing the text requires less creativity and more knowledge of generic features.

One of the disadvantages of getting students to focus on the product of writing is that it doesn't teach students to write independently and it discourages creativity since this approach relies heavily on the imitation of model text.

2.2.1. Suggested Activity for Enhancing Product Writing



Figure 2 Sample letter for product writing

2.3. The Comparison between Process and Product Writing

Process writing	Product writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> text as a resource for comparison ideas as starting point more than one draft more global, focus on purpose, theme, text type, i.e., reader is emphasized collaborative emphasis on creative process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> imitate model text organisation of ideas more important than ideas themselves one draft features highlighted including controlled practice of those features individual emphasis on end product

3. Data Analysis

Through the questionnaires survey supported to the fourth-year students at TU (Mandalay), their strengths and weakness are found out. Survey form is an essential fact that cannot be ignored because it can be used for collecting information from the learners about their needs and weakness in writing skill.

- Which skill(s) are you interested in most?
- How often do you have to do writing exercises in your class?
- What is your attitude towards writing exercises based on process approach?
- What are the main problems you face in writing English?
- Which approaches of writing are you interested in?
- Which type(s) of writing should be emphasized for the fourth-year students?
- How efficient are you in the process writing?
- How efficient are you in the product writing?
- What type(s) of activities are used to improve your writing skill?
- How do you find group activities in the writing class?

Question (1)	Reading (30)	Writing (40)	Speaking (20)	Listening (10)
Question (2)	Very often (10)	Often (80)	Sometimes (10)	
Question (3)	Gain Benefit (90)	Unwanted stress (10)	No need to be serious (-)	No idea (-)
Question (4)	Grammar (50)	Function (10)	Vocabulary (30)	Spelling (10)
Question (5)	Process Approach (80)	Product Approach (20)	Genre Approach (-)	Social Genre Approach (-)
Question (6)	Descriptive Writing (15)	Argumentative Writing (10)	Process Writing (45)	Product Writing (30)
Question (7)	Good (75)	Excellent (-)	Fair (25)	Poor (-)
Question (8)	Good (25)	Excellent (-)	Fair (75)	Poor (-)
Question (9)	Planning (40)	Brainstorming (20)	Drafting (5)	Pre-Writing (35)
Question (10)	Very Interesting (80)	Interesting (20)	Not Interesting (-)	

4. Findings

The results of data show that most students are interested in writing skill and they can get benefit by practising writing activities. They enjoy doing group activities which make them interesting and enjoyable. According to the questionnaires, the main problems faced by most students in writing are grammar structure and vocabulary knowledge. Most of the students answered that they find process approach more effective for improving their writing ability than product approach. Through the questionnaires, many students more eager to participate process and product writing whereas others enjoy descriptive and argumentative writing. According to the result, most students are interested and proficient in process writing activity because various stages of process writing can strengthen and improve students' writing skills in classroom and real-life situations. answered that they are good at process writing. Moreover, they said that Pre-writing and planning activities support for the

development of their writing skill than other types of activities.

5. Recommendation

According to survey, the students want to be skilful in writing. Writing plays an important role in English for engineering students. However, the students are weak in the writing skill. To overcome the students' difficulties in the writing skill, teachers should more practice on writing exercises that are interesting, challenging and motivating using more effective teaching methods. And students should study not only their prescribed textbooks but also others on writing suggested by their teachers.

Teachers are responsible for stimulating students' motivation by means of different activities in order to promote their ability in organizing their ideas logically. If they train the students by using effective approaches, students will become competent writers. Moreover, there are many effective apps that improve students' writing especially in spelling, vocabulary and grammar, for example, Crossword Puzzles, Sentence Builder, Google Docs, Writing Challenge and so on. When the teachers use activities to create the students' interest and motivation, students will improve their writing skills and can write effectively and efficiently.

6. Conclusion

This research paper is aimed to enhance the writing skill of the fourth-year students who are attending at Technological University, Mandalay. Writing is an instrument of both communication and self-expression, students need to learn and develop the writing skill. Written products are often the result of thinking, drafting and revising procedures that require specialized skills. As regards the development of their writing ability, effective approaches like process and product approaches are presented in this research paper. As a result, students will be able to write well and they will have confidence when they do the actual writing.

To sum up, it is hoped that this research paper will fulfil the requirements in developing students' writing skill.

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