

## **IMPLEMENTING PRODUCT AND PROCESS WRITING APPROACH ON ESP COURSE FOR FRESHMEN AT UNIVERSITY**

**Prima Beauty Kartikasari**

**Politeknik Negeri Malang**

### **Abstract**

This article focuses on learning situations in an ESP classroom at a university. Having taught heterogeneous learners, the researcher found that many students still experience low learning achievement in writing lessons. Therefore, the researcher needs new ideas to prepare her students for a more meaningful writing experiences in classroom. I believe that adapting both product and process approach through collaborative writing tasks is one way to overcome the problem. To explain my arguments briefly, I would firstly describe the ESP course learner's situation. Then, I will address the problem by reviewing some literature related to writing approaches in which I believe could help. Lastly, I will put the literature and implement it to my context. It is expected that having collaborative writing by using product-process approach can help my students experience a good learning experience with peers.

*Keywords: Product approach, process approach, collaborative writing, ESP course*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Most new students or freshmen at universities in Indonesia come from various streams, like, Science and Engineering, Business Administration, and others. Basically, they are non-English Department students who take compulsory English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in the beginning of their study. Since English is a foreign language, the medium of instruction in most of Indonesian universities is not in English. In fact, only some of the students in the context get exposure to English in their former high schools. Therefore, it is understandable that there are classes with heterogeneous English proficiency level (Scrivener, 2012). There are several students who have already been at pre-intermediate level of English proficiency. However, the writer found that there were many slow learner students who still face

difficulty even in just formulating a simple sentence. In short, some of the students' understanding of the texts and writing skill is still not worth mention.

Based on the syllabus of ESP at a university in East Java, Indonesia where the research occurs, the course consists of four language skill classes, namely Speaking, Reading, Writing and Listening. This programme is taught in two consecutive semesters where students must take Reading and Listening at the first semester, and the other two at the second term. The teaching and learning activities in each module is divided into 14 meetings per semester with 90 minutes in each session. By the end of this ESP programme, the students' competence will be assessed through a standardised proficiency test, called Test of Academic English Proficiency (TAEP). The test, however, only covered Reading and Listening skills. Whereas,

Speaking and Writing had to be independently assessed by the teacher.

In the writing class, the students are expected to study model texts and the features of the genre are highlighted. For example, when studying a letter, the focus of the lesson is on the various expressions used to make formal requests. If the students learn about narrative stories, their attention is drawn to the techniques used in order to make amusing climax, and they will focus on where and how the writers employ those techniques. Moreover, the activities are highly in controlled practice, focusing on the language features. For instance, the students will be asked to complete an expression of a formal request 'We would be pleased if you would.....' structure. Then, by using the content structure and language feature they have acquired, the instructors asked them to produce a similar text individually. The writing product should be submitted at the same day since the class had to move to another topic in the next session. Overall, the activities emphasize on the learners' final piece of writing (product approach) instead of the process of producing the writing itself (Agustina, 2016; Hasan and Ahkand, 2010; Ngadiman, 2012).

Since the ESP writing syllabus consists of different text types and assess students' work in each meeting, the writer considers this course as fast paced. However, it is found out that the freshmen have wide range of levels of proficiency in writing. Based on initial observations, the mixed abilities are caused by the fact that the two third of them have not received any intensive writing class in secondary school. Consequently, only few students were able to produce a piece of writing in a session. Meanwhile, the other group of students could not finish even a paragraph since they did not know how to generate and organize ideas into written form. Subsequently, not every student could submit a piece of writing in each meeting.

In this paper, the writer would like to focus on one of those teaching situations regarding the discrepancy of students' ability. Specifically, this paper discusses the ESP writing lesson in the context. As the university curriculum in the university expects the student to have the ability to write course assignments, internship reports, and final project report in English, writing course becomes one of the priorities in English language learning. Knowing that the level of students' English language skills varies, the writer realizes the need of constructive ideas to prepare the students for a better writing lesson.

Related to such problems, the writer was interested in combining approaches between product and process approach by collaborating the heterogeneous students to learn and comprehend writing lesson. Thus, this paper proposes 'Implementing Product and Process Writing Approach on ESP Course for Freshmen at University.'

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Relevant Theories**

#### **a. The Product Approach**

In my teaching so far, I have been using an approach which I believe to be a product approach. The aim of my teaching was to familiarise them with certain predetermined topics and its language features including vocabulary and grammar knowledge. In real practice, students are exposed to a chosen good writing and required to imitate the examples to produce one at the end of the session individually. This is similar to the definition of product approach, which provides students with sample texts as the guided composition to write (Hyland, 2009).

Badger and White (2000), however, criticise that this approach undermines the value of process in writing as well as gives little room for students to optimise their knowledge in classroom. In my point of view, I acknowledge that product approach only sees writing as an activity that strictly follows constructed form, grammar rules. In fact,

writers have distinctive writing styles. For instance, when assigned to write in a certain topic, two writers might have different pieces of writing.

Despite the drawbacks, I realise that I still need this approach for my students, especially those who have limited experience in L2 writing. Through the guided writing activities, they learn from certain features of texts and could practise to produce one. Moreover, since the students would have one-meeting exam to produce a piece of writing, product-oriented approach should still be maintained.

I admit, however, that solely depending on this approach will not help students develop their writing skills in the future. Thus, it is suggested that combining product writing with another approach might successfully help.

#### b. The Process Approach

Process approach is a methodology that introduces learners on how a piece of writing is produced in factual and complex procedures (Hedge, 2000). The key purpose of process approach is to develop the language skills of writers through several stages of activities (Nunan, 1995). In a typical L2 writing classroom using process approach, the learners will undergo several stages: formulating purpose, deciding topic, composing paragraph, revising and editing.

Raimes (1985, in Tribble, 1996) explains that the stages are not always sequential, in which writer might go back and forth in certain order that they think necessary. Different from product approach that emulates certain model of text, process-oriented approach encourages students to create a topic and manage all the writing steps (Hedge, 2000).

However, Tribble (1996) criticises process approach in L2 writing as being suitable only to certain writers who have independent control of their creative process. In this case, writers should have the ability to arrange the ideas inside their mind before writing it down to a piece of paper. In my classroom context, this could be a problem since two-third of my students need intensive guidance to reach the phase of becoming an independent writer. Thus, I do not think by

solely adopting process approach in my class will easily solving my students' writing problem.

Additionally, the other drawback that affects my teaching process is the time constraint. By applying this approach only, I have to spend several meetings to assist them through all stages. Meanwhile, the students are required to finish each topic in each lesson by submitting a written product.

#### c. Collaborative Writing

One of the strategies that might help my students to write is collaborative writing. According to Harmer (2004), this strategy could assist a pair or small group of learners to jointly produce writing pieces. This strategy is aimed at helping students to be able to share knowledge and responsibility. The activities could be in the form of generating a topic, composing a paragraph, as well as reviewing their own or other group's work. Logically, as there are two or more heads working together, the writing result is expected to be more successful than when assigned individually. Additionally, as Jones et al (2007) state, collaborative writing could help to increase students' learning motivation.

There are some reasons why collaborative writing might be useful for my students. Nunan (1992) asserts that the more students get familiar with collaborative writing, the more prepared they are with their life outside of the classroom. Thus, collaborative writing does not only help my students to learn writing, but also to develop their interpersonal skill. Wigglesworth and Storch, (2012, p. 364) add:

*"Similarly in the workplace, group projects are quite common and part of the reason that higher education learners are expected to work collaboratively."*

In a study comparing pair and individual writing composition in (L2) classroom, Storch (2005) reveals that pairwork produces better texts in terms of grammar and range of vocabularies than individual could result. Although the scale of Storch's (2005) research is considered small to represent the result, the

process shows that collaboration helps students share their knowledge in creating the idea. Moreover, the idea of collaborative activity could encourage their writing habit in an interactive way (Harmer, 2015; Harmer, 2004). I find it suitable for my students who are required to compose a writing piece and finish one in a session.

Practically, collaborative writing activity could be applied in two ways (Scrivener, 2012). The first way is to group learners based on their levels. It means that two or three low performers will work together and so will the fast performers. The second option is by forming multiple mix-level groups. In this way, a high performer is assigned to help as well as complete the writing task with other low performers in a group. In my case, the low performers refer to those who have not learned EFL writing in secondary school. Meanwhile, the high performers are those who have been prepared with EFL writing when they were in high school.

Despite the benefit, I have to be wary of the drawbacks of collaborating slow and fast learners. Firstly, collaborative grouping method demands a clear classification of fast and low performers. However, Scrivener (2012) warns that each learner might possess variety of levels in language skills. For example, one could be good at receptive skills, but struggle at writing or speaking. Then, If the members of each writing group have different language capabilities, it might be challenging for them to produce ideal composition. Thus, I must carefully understand the writing proficiency level of each student before assigning them into a group.

The second weakness of this group writing technique is students' reluctance to participate in their group work, Scrivener (2012) adds. It possibly occurs since I plan to group them based on my selection of students' writing levels. However, it could cause some reluctant students not to cooperate or even complete the task (Scrivener, 2012). Although it is true, Jones et al (2007) asserts that group work can still be positive and supportive benefit in the classroom.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Formerly, I implemented pure product-based approach to my students in each meeting. I believed that this perspective could familiarise every student with useful samples of what I considered as good writing sources. At that time, I was confident that guiding them to copy the structure of several samples of a text, would train them to write efficiently. In fact, my low performers remained facing difficulties to start writing. They were confused of what they had to do after reading and identifying all the samples. As a result, the slow performers could not finish their assigned work.

I realised that my teaching strategy needs to be evaluated. Instead of only depending on copying the structure of several texts and obliging students to work individually, I should adapt another approach as well as create more communicative activities for them. I think that combining product oriented with the spirit of process approach might be suitable to optimise my students' developing stages. It is because introducing students with various stages of writing will be more beneficial than highly focusing on their language structure (Clark, 2012). Moreover, I should also assign high and low performers to start working in pair for a piece of writing. This would help create better atmosphere during their writing completion.

One reason why combining the two approaches would be helpful is that students could experience structured activities while studying the language features of a text sample. Through the process, they would be confident to write as they can learn from model text. Moreover, the idea of process approach allows them to repeat some steps to ascertain the content if necessary (Tribble, 1996).

In addition, I could make use of collaboration between low and high performers so that they would share their thoughts as a team. Practically, they would decide a topic together to generate ideas and compose sentences in mutual agreement. During the activities, however, the students have a time constraint that they would have to

produce a piece of writing in each week. Due to this time constraint, I could not utilise full stages of process approach. Instead, I would adapt some activities from product and process approaches and assist students to work in pair or a group of three. The reason why I prefer assigning my students in small groups is based on the research by Dobao and Blum (2013). One of the activities that I would like to explain is about writing reports for students of Engineering. In this paper, I would specifically discuss pre-writing and composing paragraph.

First example that I could implement to my students is pre-writing. In this phase, I will start the activity by giving them a model report text with a blank spidergram or mind map to fill in. I choose mind map because my students often get confused and waste all the time only to generate idea when writing a text. The use of spidergram is intended to stimulate students' creative thinking especially when in group (Harmer, 2004). Instead of handing the students with empty paper, I will provide some pre-answered section to help them complete the visual chart. I will also use visual representation that enables them to practice finding topics and sub-topics quickly.

After comprehending how to identify topics from a model text through spidergram, I will teach them some language features, for instance, levels of formality in writing reports that depends on who will receive the report. I will prepare some random materials, such as papers, erasers, sticky-note, stapler and pencils, and ask them to choose some to create a replica of a product in group. In approximately 5 minutes, students should be ready with a product, i.e., a tool. Then, they are asked to discuss and draw a spidergram to explain what the product is, how to recreate it and the function or potential use of the product. The topics are just one example in which students could elicit their own suggestion of content to the mind map.

At the second stage, the students now directly work on paragraph composition. In this stage, they jointly write approximately two

simple paragraphs of a report from the product they made. From this activity, I expect the students to be able to develop their ideas from the spidergram and put the language features they have just learned into practice. By using the language feature from what they have just learned, students will learn to write in more accurate and appropriate language (Hedge, 2000). In addition, as they are assigned to work in groups, they are expected to experience enjoyable learning activities. As Jones et al (2007) state, in group work, members would get motivated since they believe they can do the task and complete it together.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

In this paper, I have proposed a solution to help my low performance students successfully complete every writing task in a more communicative and enjoyable way. I have implemented both product and process approach through collaborative writing tasks. Although I have given a sample of the activity, I admit that the sample provided above was not the only possible solution to overcome the problem. For example, I could employ peer-feedback activity in writing revision. However, due to this paper limitation, I could not explain in detail.

Another possible solution to solve the issue is to revise the curriculum, especially regarding the students' obligation to submit a piece of writing in each meeting. Moreover, instead of having a class with distinct abilities, I think it would be wise to distribute them based on their level. As Scrivener (2012, p. 88) states, separating low and high performers into different classes would encourage them to learn at 'their own pace'.

Unfortunately, I could not implement these two suggestions as I am not the policy maker in my institution. Thus, although not ideal, the solution that I have proposed might be the most feasible to be carried out for the time being.

## **REFERENCES**

- Agustina, V. 2016. Combining Product and Process-Based Approaches to Teaching Writing Discussion Texts. *Journal of English Education. Vol 4(2)*, pp. 195-208.
- Badger, R., White, G. 2000. A process genre approach to teaching writing. *ELT Journal. 54(2)*, pp.
- Clark, I. L. 2012. *Concepts in composition: theory and practice in the teaching of writing. 2nd edn.* New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Dobao, A. F., Blum, A. Collaborative writing in pairs and small groups: Learners' attitudes and perceptions. *System. 41* (2013), pp. 365-378.
- Harmer, J. 2004. *How to teach writing.* Essex: Pearson Education Limited
- Harmer, J. 2015. *The practice of english language teaching.* Harlow: Pearson education limited.
- Hasan, M.K., Akhand, M. 2010. Approaches to Writing in EFL/ESL Context: Balancing Product and Process in Writing Class at Tertiary Level. *Journal of Nelta. Vol 15(1-2)*, pp. 77-88.
- Hedge, T. 2000. *Teaching and learning in the language classroom.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hyland, K. 2009. *Teaching and researching writing. 2nd ed.* Harlow: Pearson education limited.
- Jones, V., Jones, L. 2007. *Comprehensive classroom management.* Boston: Pearson education limited.
- Ngadiman, A. (2012). Effects of process-oriented approach to teaching writing to English department students. *Magister Scientiae Journal, 31.*
- Nunan, D. 1992. *Collaborative language learning and teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nunan, D. 1995. *Language teaching methodology.* Hertfordshire: International Book Distributors Ltd.
- Scrivener, J. 2012. *Classroom management techniques.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Storch, N. 2005. Collaborative writing: product, process, and students' reflections. Elsevier, *Journal of Second Language Writing* (14), pp.153–173.
- Tribble, C. 1996. *Writing.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wigglesworth, G., Storch, N. 2012. What role for collaboration in writing and writing feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing. 21.* pp. 364–374.